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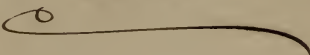
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# IDOLATRY:

A ROMANCE.

EXTRACTS FROM SOME PRESS NOTICES OF

## BRESSANT,

BY JULIAN HAWTHORNE,

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HENRY S. KING & CO., LONDON.

# I D O L A T R Y :

A Romance.

BY

JULIAN HAWTHORNE.

VOLUME I.

HENRY S. KING & Co.,  
65 CORNHILL, & 12 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

1874.

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v. 1

TO ROBERT CARTER ESQ., OF NEW YORK.

Not the intrinsic merits of this story embolden me to inscribe it to you, my dear friend, but the fact that you, more than any man, are responsible for its writing. Your advice and encouragement first led me to book-making; so it is only fair that you should partake of whatever obloquy (or honour) the practice may bring upon me.

The ensuing pages may incline you to suspect their author of a repugnance to unvarnished truth; but—without prejudice to Othello—since varnish brings out in wood veins of beauty invisible before the application, why not also in the sober facts of life? When the transparent artifice has been penetrated, the familiar substance underneath will be greeted

none the less kindly ; nay, the observer will perhaps regard the disguise as an oblique compliment to his powers of insight, and his attention may thus be better secured than had the subject worn its every-day dress. Seriously, the most matter-of-fact life has moods when the light of romance seems to gild its earthen chimney-pots into fairy minarets ; and were the story-teller but sure of laying his hands on the true gold, perhaps the more the story had of it, the better !

Here, however, comes in the grand difficulty ; fact nor fancy is often reproduced in true colours ; and while attempting justly to combine life's elements, the writer has to beware that they be not mere cheap imitations thereof. Not seldom does it happen that what he proffers as genuine arcana of imagination and philosophy, affects the reader as a dose of Hieroglyphics and Balderdash.—Nevertheless, the first duty of the fiction-monger—no less than of

the photographic artist doomed to produce successful portraits of children-in-arms—is, to be amusing ; to shrink at no shift which shall beguile the patient into procrastinating escape until the critical moment be gone by. The gentle reader will not too sternly set his face against such artifices ; but, so they go not the length of fantastically presenting phenomena inexplicable upon any common-sense hypothesis,—he will, rather, lend himself to his own beguilement. The performance once over, let him, if so inclined, strip the feathers from the flights of imagination, and wash the colour from the incidents ; if aught, save the driest and most ordinary matters-of-fact reward his researches, then let him be offended !

*De te Fabula* does not apply here, my dear friend ; for you will show me more indulgence than I have skill to demand. And, should you find matter of interest in this book, yours, rather than the author's, will be the merit.

As the beauty of nature is from the eye that looks upon her, so would the story be dull and barren, save for the life and colour of the reader's sympathy.—Yours most sincerely,

JULIAN HAWTHORNE.



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# IDOLATRY.



## I.

### *THE ENCHANTED RING.*

ONE of the most imposing buildings in Boston, twenty years ago, was a granite hotel, whose western windows looked upon a grave-yard. Passing up a flight of steps, and beneath a portico of dignified granite columns, and so, through an embarrassing pair of swinging doors to the roomy vestibule;—you would there pause a moment to expectorate upon the black and white tessellated pavement. Having thus asserted your title to Puritan ancestry, and to the best accommodations the house afforded, you

would approach the desk and write your name in the hotel-register. This done, you would be apt to run your eye over the last dozen arrivals, on the chance of lighting upon the autograph of some acquaintance,—to be shunned or sought, according to circumstances.

Let us, for the story's sake, suppose that the gentle reader is a guest of this hotel on a certain night during the latter part of May, in the year Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-three. Turning to the ninety-ninth page of the register above-mentioned, he will remark that the last name thereon written is, "Doctor Hiero Glyphic; Room 27." The natural inference is that, unless so odd a name be an assumed one, Doctor Glyphic occupies that room. Now, passing on to page one hundred, the first entry reads as follows;—"Balder Helwyse, Cosmopolis; Room 29."

In no trifling mood do we call attention to these two names, and above all to their relative

position in the book. Had they both appeared upon the same page, this Romance might never have been written. On such seemingly frail pegs hang consequences the most weighty! Because Doctor Glyphic preferred the humble foot of page 99 to the trouble of turning to a leading position on page 100; or because Mr Helwyse, having begun the 100th, was too incurious to hunt up his next door neighbour on the 99th; ensued unparalleled adventures, and this account of them!

Our present purpose—by the reader's leave and in his company—is to violate Doctor Hiero Glyphic's retirement, as he lies asleep in bed. Nor shall we stop at his bedside! we mean to penetrate deep into the darksome caves of his memory, and to drag forth thence sundry odd-looking secrets, which shall blink and look strangely in the light of discovery—little thought their keeper that our eyes should ever behold them! Yet will he not resent our in-

trusion ; for it is twenty years ago, and he lies asleep!

Two o'clock sounds from the neighbouring steeple of the Old South Church, as we noiselessly enter the chamber—noiselessly, for the hush of the past is about us. We scarcely distinguish anything at first ; the moon has set on the other side of the hotel ; and perhaps, too, some of the dimness of these twenty intervening years affects our eyesight. By degrees, however, objects begin to define themselves ; the bed shows doubtfully white, and that dark blot upon the pillow must be the face of our sleeping man. It is turned towards the window ; the mouth is open,—probably the good Doctor snores, albeit across this extent of time the sound fails to reach us.

The room is as bare, square, and characterless as other hotel rooms ; nevertheless, its occupant may have left a hint or two of himself about which would be of use to us. There are

no trunks or other luggage ; evidently he will be on his way again to-morrow. The window is shut, for all that the night is warm and clear. The door is carefully locked. The Doctor's garments (which seem to be of rather a jaunty and knowing cut for one of his grave profession) are lying disorderly about, on chair, table, or floor. He carries no watch, but under his pillow we see protruding the corner of a great leathern pocket-book, which might contain a fortune in bank-notes.

A couple of chairs are drawn up to the bedside, upon one of which stands a blown-out candle, while the other supports an oblong, coffin-shaped box, narrower at one end than at the other, and painted black. Too small for a coffin, however ; no human corpse, at least, is contained in it. But the frame that lies so quiet and motionless here, thrills, when awakened to life, with a soul only less marvellous than man's. The coffin, in short, is a violin-case,

and the mysterious frame the violin. The Doctor must have been fiddling overnight, after getting in bed ; to the dissatisfaction, probably, of his neighbour on the other side of the thin partition.

Little else in the room is worthy notice, unless it be the pocket-comb which has escaped from the Doctor's waistcoat, and the shaving materials, also pocketable, upon the wash-stand. Apparently he does not stand on much toilet-ceremony. The room has nothing more of significance to communicate, so now we come to the room's occupant. Our eyes have got enough accustomed to the imperfect light to make out what manner of man he may be.

Barely middle-aged ; or, at a second glance, he might be fifteen to five-and-twenty years older. His face, while retaining the form of youth, wears a subtle shadow which we feel might be consistent even with extreme old age. Regular eyebrows support the wide, low forehead ; the



long and narrow face beneath is of a dry and swarthy complexion. In sleep, open-mouthed, the expression is rather inane; though we can readily imagine the waking face to be not devoid of a certain intensity and comeliness of aspect, marred, however, by an air of guarded secrecy apparent even now.

We prattle of the dead past, and use to fancy that peace must dwell there, if nothing else. Only in the past, say we, is security from jostle, danger, and disturbance; who would live at his ease must number his days backwards; no charm so potent as the years, if read from right to left. Living in the past, prophecy and memory are at one; care for the future can harass no man. Overboard with that Jonah—Time—and the winds of fortune shall cease to buffet us! And more to the same effect.

And yet it is not so. The past, if more real than the future, is no less so than is the present; the pain of a broken heart or head

never is annihilated, but becomes part and parcel of eternity. This uneasy snorer here, for instance,—his earthly troubles have been over long ago ; yet as our fancy sees him, he is none the calmer or the happier for that. Mark him how he mumbles inarticulately, and makes strengthless clutchings at the blanket with his long slender fingers !

But we delay too long over the external man, when our avowed business is with the internal. A sleeping man is truly a helpless creature ! They say that if you take his hand in yours, and ask him questions, he has no choice than to answer—or to awake. The Doctor—as we know by virtue of the prophetic advantages just remarked upon—will stay asleep for some hours yet. Or, if you are clairvoyant, you have only to fall in a trance and lay a hand on his forehead, and you may read off all his thoughts—provided he do his thinking in his head ! The world, however, is now-a-days

growing too wise to put faith in old women's nonsense like this. Again, there is (or used to be) a curious theory that all matter is a sort of photographic plate, whereon is registered—had we but eyes to read it—the complete history of itself. What an invaluable pair of eyes were that! In vain, arraigned before them, would the criminal deny his guilt,—the lover the soft impeachment. The whole scene would stand forth, photographed in fatal minuteness and indelibility upon face, hands, coat-sleeve, shirt-bosom. Mankind would be its own book of life, written in the primal hieroglyphic character—the language understood by all. Vocal conversation would become obsolete,—unless among the few superior persons able to discuss abstract ideas!

We speak of these things only to smile at them; far be it from us to insult our reader's understanding by asking him to regard them seriously. But story-tellers labour under one

disadvantage peculiar to the profession—the necessity of omniscience. It tends to make them too arbitrary—leads them to disregard the modesty of nature and the harmonies of reason in their methods. They will pretend to know things which they could never have seen or heard of, and for the truth of which they bring forward no evidence : thus forcing the reader to reject, as lacking proper conformation, what he would else—from its inherent grace and sprightliness—be happy to accept.

That we shall be free from this reproach is rather our good fortune than our merit. It is by favour of our stars, not by virtue of our own, that we turn not aside from the plain path of truth to the byeways of supernaturalism and improbability. Nevertheless we find it hard to refrain from a breath of self-praise ; there is a proud and solid satisfaction in holding an unassailable position. Could we but catch the world's eye, we would meet it calmly !

Let us hasten to introduce our talisman. You may see it at this very moment, encircling the third finger of Doctor Glyphic's left hand ; in fact, it is neither more nor less than a quaint diamond ring. The stone, though not surprisingly large, is surpassingly pure and brilliant ; as its keen delicate ray sparkles on the eye, one marvels whence, in the dead of night, it got together so much celestial fire ! Observe the setting,—the design is unique. Two fairy serpents, one golden, the other fashioned from black meteoric iron, are intertwined along their whole length, forming the hoop of the ring. Their heads approach the diamond from opposite sides, and each makes a mighty bite at it with tiny jaws studded with sharp little teeth. Thus their contest holds the stone firmly in place. The whole forms a pretty symbol of the human soul, battled for by the good and evil principles. But the diamond seems in its entirety to be an awkward mouth-

ful for either. The snakes are wrought with wondrous dexterity and finish ; each separate scale is distinguishable upon their glistening bodies, the wrinkling of the skin in the coils, the sparkling points of eyes, and the minute nostrils. Such works of art are not made now-a-days. The ring is an antique—a relic of an age when skill was out of all proportion to liberty—a very distant time ! To deserve its setting, the stone must possess very exceptional qualities. Let us look more closely at it.

Fortunately, its own lustre makes it visible in every part ; the minuteness of our scrutiny need be limited only by our eye-power. It is cut with many facets—twenty-seven, if you choose to count them ; perhaps (though we little credit such fantasies) some mystic significance may be intended in this number. Concentrating now our attention upon any single facet, we see—either inscribed upon its surface, or showing through from the interior of the

stone—a sort of monogram or intricately designed character, not unlike those mysterious Chinese letters on tea chests. Every facet has a similar figure, though no two are identical. But the central—the twenty-seventh facet—which is larger than the others, has an important peculiarity. We find therein concentrated and commingled the other twenty-six characters, which, separately unintelligible, form where thus united a plain and coherent narrative—the complete history, in fact, of the ring itself!

A small part of this narrative—that, namely, which concerns the present owner of the ring—shall forthwith be read; the rest must be silence, although (going back as it does to the earliest records of the human race), many an interesting page must be skipped perforce.

The advantages to a historian of a medium such as this, are too patent to need pointing out. Pretension and conjecture will be avoided, because unnecessary. The most trifling

thought or deed of any person connected with this ring's history, is open to direct inspection. Were there more such talismans as this, the profession of authorship would become no less easy than delightful, and criticism would sting itself to death in despair of better prey. So far as is known, however, the enchanted ring is unique of its kind, and, such as it is, has long since vanished from the common reach.



## II.

### *OUT OF EGYPT.*

BUT the small hours of the morning are slipping away ; we must construe our hieroglyphics without further palaver. The sleeper lies on his side, his left hand resting beside his face upon the pillow. Were he to move it ever so little during our investigation, the history of years might be thrown into confusion. Nevertheless we shall hope to touch on the more important parts, and occasionally to go into details.

Concentrating our attention upon the central facet, its clear ray strikes the imagination, and forthwith transports us to a distant age and clime. The air is full of lazy warmth ; a full-fed river, glassing the hot blue sky, slides in long curves through a low-lying, illimitable

plain. The rich earth, green with mighty crops, everywhere exhales upward the quivering heat of her breath. An indolent, dark-skinned race, turbaned and scantily clothed, move through the meadows, splash in the river, and rest beneath the palm trees, which meet in graceful clusters here and there, as if striving to get beneath one another's shadow. Dirty villages swarm and babble on the river's brink.

Were there leisure to listen, the diamond could readily relate the whole history of this famous valley. For the stone was fashioned to its present shape while yet the thought that formed the pyramids was unborn, and while the limestone and granite whereof they are built, lay in their silent beds, dreaming, perchance, of airy days before the deluge, long ere the heated vapors stiffened into stone. Some great patriarch of early days, founder of a race called by his name, picked up this diamond in the southern desert, and gave it its present form,—

perhaps breathing into it the marvellous gift which it retains to this day. Who was that primal man? how sounded his voice? were his eyes terrible or mild?—Seems, as we speak, we glimpse his majestic figure, the grandeur of his face, his cloudlike beard!

He passed away, but the enchanted stone remained, and has sparkled along the splendid march of successive dynasties, and has reflected men and cities which to us are nameless, or but a half deciphered name. It has seen mystic ceremonies of Egyptian priests, and counts their boasted wisdom a twice-told tale. It has watched the unceasing toil of innumerable slaves, piling up through many ardent years the idle tombs of kings. It has beheld vast winding lengths of processions darken and glitter across the plain, slowly devoured by the shining city, or issuing from her gates like a monstrous birth.

But whither wander we? we must confine

I.

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our researches to a far later epoch than the Pharaohs'. Step aside, and let the old history sweep past, like the turbid and eddying current of the mysterious Nile: forbearing to launch our skiff earlier than at the beginning of the present century.

The middle of June, Eighteen Hundred and Sixteen : the river is just beginning to rise, and the thirsty land spreads wide her lap to receive him. Some miles to the north slumbers Cairo in white heat, its outline jagged with minarets and bulbous domes. Southward the shaded Pyramids print their everlasting outlines against the tremulous distance ; old as they are, it seems as though a puff of the Khamsin might dissolve them away. Near at hand is a naked, noisy crowd of men and boys, plunging and swimming in the water, sitting and standing along the bank. They are watching and discussing the slow approach up stream of a large boat with a broad lateen sail, and a strange

flag fluttering at the masthead. Rumor says that this boat contains a company of strangers from beyond the sea,—men who do not wear turbans, whose dress is close-fitting and covers them from head to foot, even the legs! They come to learn wisdom and civilisation from the Pyramids, and amidst the ruins of Memphis.

A hundred yards below this shouting curious crowd, waist-deep in the Nile, stands a slender-limbed boy about ten years old. He belongs to a superior caste, and holds himself above the common rabble. Being perfectly naked, a careless eye might, however, rank him with the rest, were it not for the talisman which he wears suspended to a fine gold chain round his neck; a curiously-designed diamond ring, the inheritance from a long line of priestly ancestors. The boy's face is certainly full of intelligence, and the features are finely moulded for so young a lad.

He also is watching the upward progress of

the lateen sail; has heard, moreover, the report concerning those on board. He wonders where is the country from which they come? is it the land the storks fly to, of which mother (before the plague carried both her and father to a still stranger land) used to tell such wonderful tales? Does the world really extend far beyond the valley? is the world all valley and river, with now and then hills, like those away up beyond Memphis? Are there other cities besides Cairo and that other of which he has heard but has not seen—Alexandria? Wonders why the strangers should dress in tight-fitting clothes, with leg-coverings, and without turbans! Would like to find out about all these things, about all things knowable besides these, if any there be. Would like to go back with the strangers to their country when they return, and so become the wisest and most powerful of his race—wiser even than those fabulously-learned priestly instructors of his, who are so strict with him.

Perhaps he might find all his forefathers there, and his kind mother, who used to tell him stories!

Bah! how the sun blisters down on head and shoulders! will take a swim and a dive—a short swim only, not far from shore; for was not the priest telling of a boy caught by a great crocodile, only a few days ago, and never seen since? But there is no crocodile near to-day, and besides, will not his precious talisman keep him from all harm?

The subtle Nile catches him softly in his cool arms, dandles him, kisses him, flatters him, woos him imperceptibly onward. Now, he is far from shore, and the multitudinous feet of the current are hurrying him away. The slow moving boat is much nearer than it was a minute ago—seems to be rushing towards him, in spite of the laziness of the impelling breeze. The boy, as yet unconscious of his peril, now glances shorewards and sees the banks wheel

past. The crowd of bathers is already far beyond hearing, yet, frightened and weary, he wastes his remaining strength in fruitless shouts. Now the deceitful eddies, lately so soft and friendly, whirl him down in ruthless exultation. He will never reach the shore, good swimmer though he be.

Hark! what plunged from the bank,—what black thing moves towards him across the water? The crocodile! coming with tears in eyes, and a long grin of serried teeth. Coming!—the ugly scaly head is always nearer and nearer. The boy screams, but who should hear him? He feels whether the talisman be yet around his neck. He screams again, calling in half-delirium upon his dead mother. Meanwhile, the scaly snout is close upon him. . . .

A many-voiced shout close at hand, a splashing of poles in the water, a rippling of eddies against the boat's bows! As the boy drifts by, a blue-eyed, yellow-bearded viking swings himself



from the halyard, catches him, pulls him on board with a jerk and a shout—safe! The long grin snaps together in vain behind him. The boy lies on the deck, a vision of people with leg-coverings and other oddities of costume swimming before his eyes: one of them supports his head, and bends over him a round, good-natured, spectacled face. Above, a beautiful flag, striped and starred with white, blue, and red flaps indolently against the mast.—

Precisely at this point the sleeper stirs his hand slightly, but enough to throw the record of several succeeding years into disorder. Here and there, however, we catch imperfect glimpses of the Egyptian lad, steadily growing up to be a tall young man. He dresses in European clothes, and lives and moves amid civilised surroundings: Egypt, with her Pyramids, palms, and river, we see no more. The priest's son seems now immersed in studies; he develops a genius for music and painting, and diligently

stores his mind with other than Egyptian lore. With him, or never far away, we see a person considerably older than the student, good-natured, whimsical, round of head and face, and insignificant of feature. Towards him does the student observe the profoundest deference, bows before him, and addresses him as "Master Hiero," or "Master Glyphic." Master Hiero for his part calls the Egyptian "Manetho,"—from which we might infer the latter's descent from the renowned historian of that name—but will not insist upon this genealogy. As for the studies, we fancy they tend towards theology; the descendant of Egyptian priests is to become a Christian clergyman! Nevertheless, he still wears his talismanic ring. Does he believe it saved him from the Crocodile? does his Christian enlightenment not set him free from such superstition?

So much we piece together from detached glimpses; but now, as the magic ray steadies

again, things become once more distinct. Judging from the style and appointments of Master Glyphic's house, he is a wealthy man and eccentric into the bargain. The building is full of strange incongruities and discords; beauties in abundance, but ill-harmonised. One half the house is built to represent an Egyptian temple, and is enriched by many spoils from the Nile valley; and here a secret chamber is set apart for Manetho,—its very existence is known to no one save Hiero and himself. He spends much of his time here, meditating and working amidst his books and papers, playing on his violin, or leaning idly back in his chair, watching the narrow strip of sunlight through the horizontal aperture high above his head, creep stealthily across the opposite wall.

But these saintly and scholarly reveries are disturbed anon. Hiero Glyphic, though a confirmed bachelor, has a half-sister,—a pale handsome indolent young woman, with dark hair

and eyes, and a rather haughty manner. Helen appears, and thenceforward the household lives and breathes according to her languid bidding. Manetho emerges from his retirement and dances reverential attendance upon her. He is twenty-five years old now (Helen cannot be much less), tall, slender, and far from ill-looking, with his dark narrow eyes, wide brows, and tapering face. His manners are gentle, subdued, insinuating, and altogether he seems to please Helen; she condescends to him—more than condescends perhaps! Meantime—alas! there is a secret opposition in progress, embodied in the shapely person of the bright-eyed gypsy of a girl, whom her mistress, Helen, calls “Salome.” There is no question as to Salome’s complete subjection to the attractions of the young embryo clergyman; she pursues him with eyes and heart, and seeing him at Helen’s side is miserably, dumbly jealous.

How will this matter end? Manetho’s de-

votion to Helen seems unwavering, yet sometimes it is hard not to suspect a secret understanding between him and Salome! He has ceased wearing his ring, and once we caught a diamond sparkle from beneath the thick folds of lace which cover Helen's bosom. But, on the other hand, we fear his arm has been round the gypsy's graceful waist; and she has learned the secret of the private chamber! Is demure Manetho a flirt, or do his affections run counter to his ambition? Helen would invest him with the riches of this world, but what should a clergyman care for such vanities?—while Salome, to our thinking, is far the prettier, livelier, and more attractive woman of the two. Brother Hiero, whimsical and pre-occupied, sees nothing of what is going forward. He is an antiquary—an Egyptologist—and thereto his soul is wedded. He has no eyes nor ears for the loves of other people for one another!

Provoking! the uneasy sleeper has moved

again, and disorganised beyond remedy the events of a whole year ! Judging from such fragments as reach us, it must have comprised a momentous epoch in our history. From the beginning a handsome stalwart man, with a great beard like a sheaf of straw, shoulders upon the scene, and thenceforth becomes inextricably mixed up with dark-eyed Helen. We recognise in him an old acquaintance ; he was aboard the lateen-sailed boat that went up the Nile : it was he who swung himself from the vessel's side, and pulled Manetho out of the jaws of death,—a circumstance, by the way, with which Manetho remained unacquainted until his dying day. With this new arrival, Helen's supremacy in the household ends. Thor—so they call him—involuntarily commands her, and so her subjects. Against him, the Reverend Manetho has not the ghost of a chance. To his credit is it that he conceals whatever emotions of disappointment or

jealousy he might be supposed to feel, and is no less winning towards Thor than towards the rest of the world. But is it possible that the talisman still hides in Helen's bosom? Does the conflict which it symbolises beset her heart?

The enchanted mirror is still once more, and a curious scene is reflected from it. A large and lofty room, windowless, lit by flaring lamps, hung at intervals round the walls. The panels contain carvings, in bas-relief, of Egyptian emblems and devices; columns surround the central space, their capitals carved with the lotos flower, their bases planted amidst papyrus leaves. A border of hieroglyphic inscription encircles the walls, just beneath the ceiling. In each corner of the room rests a red granite sarcophagus, and between each pair of pillars stands a mummy upright in its wooden case. At that end, the furthest from the low-browed doorway (guarded by two great figures



of Isis and Osiris, sitting impassive with hands on knees), is raised an altar of black marble, on which burns some incense : the perfumed smoke, wavering upwards, mingles with that of the lamps beneath the high ceiling. The prevailing colour of the place is ruddy Indian red, relieved by dark blue, and black ; while brighter tints show here and there. Blocks of polished stone form the floor, and dimly reflect the lights.

In front of the altar stands a priestly figure—none other than Manetho, who must have taken orders—and joins in holy matrimony, yellow-bearded Thor and dark-haired Helen. Master Hiero, his round snub-nosed face red with fussy emotion, gives the bride away ; while Salome, dressed in white satin, and looking very pretty and lady-like, officiates as bridesmaid—such is her mistress's whim ! She seems in even better spirits than the pale bride, and her black eyes scarcely wander from the minister's rapt countenance.



But, a few hours later, when bride and groom are gone, Salome (who, on some plausible pretext of her own, has been allowed to remain with brother Hiero during the wedding tour)—Salome appears in the secret chamber where the Reverend Manetho sits with his head between his hands. We will not look too closely at this interview. There are words fierce and tender, tears and pleadings, feverish caresses, incoherent promises, distrustful bargains,—and it is late before they part. Salome passes through the great tomb-like hall, where all the lamps, save one, are burnt out, and the young minister remains to pursue his holy meditations alone.—

We are too discreet to meddle with the honeymoon, but passing over some eight months, behold husband and wife returned to plume their wings before taking the final flight. Another strange scene attracts us here.

The dusk of a summer evening. Helen,

with a more languid step and air than before marriage, saunters along a path through the trees, some distance from the house. She is clad in loose-flowing drapery, and has thrown a white shawl over her head and shoulders. Reaching a bench of rustic woodwork, she droops weariedly down upon it.

Manetho comes out all at once and stands before her—seems to have darkened together from the shadow of the surrounding trees. Perhaps a little startled at his so abrupt appearance, she opens her eyes with an enquiring haughtiness; but at the same time the light pressure of the enchanted ring against her bosom feels like a dull sting, and her heart beats uncomfortably. He begins to speak in his usual tone of softest deference; he sits down by her; and now she is paler,—glances anxiously up the path for her delaying husband,—and the hand that lifts her handkerchief to her lips, trembles a little. Is it at his

words ? or at their tone ? or at what she sees lurking behind his dusky eyes—curdling beneath his thin dark skin—quivering down to the tips of his slender fingers ?

All in a moment he bursts forth—without warning—without restraint—the fire of the Egyptian sun boiling in his blood and blazing in his passion. He seizes her soft white wrist,—then her waist ! presses against his her bosom—what a throbbing ! her cheek to his—how aghast ! He pours hot words in torrents into her ears—all that his fretting heart has hoarded up and brooded over for months and years !—all—sparing her not a thought—not a passionate word ! She tries to repel him—to escape—to scream for help ; but he looks down her eyes with his own, holds her fast, and she gasps for breath. So does the serpent coil about the dove, and stamps his image upon her bewildered brain.

Verily, the Reverend Manetho has much

forgotten himself ! The issue might have been disastrous, had not Helen at a critical moment lost consciousness, and fallen a dead weight in his arms. He laid her gently on the bench, fumbled for a moment in the bosom of her dress, and drew forth the diamond ring. Just then is heard the solid step of Thor, striding and whistling down the path. Manetho snaps the golden chain and vanishes with his talisman ; and he is the first to appear, full of sympathy and concern, when the distracted husband shouts for help.

Next morning, two little struggling human beings are blinking and crying in a darkened room, and there is no mother to give them milk and cherish them in her bosom. The father sits, almost as cold and still as that form which was his wife. To the last, she had not spoken to him, or seemed to know him. He will never learn the truth ; Manetho comes and

goes, and reads the burial service, unsuspected and unpunished. But Salome follows him away from the grave, and some words pass between them. The man is no longer what he was. He turns suddenly upon her and strikes out with savage force; the diamond on his finger bites into the flesh of the gipsey's breast—she will carry the scar of that brutal blow as long as she lives. So he drove his only lover away, and looked upon her bright handsome face no more.

Here Doctor Glyphic (or whoever this sleeping man may be) turns heavily upon his face, drawing his hand, with the blood-stained ring on its finger, out of sight. We are glad to leave him to his bad dreams; the air oppresses us; come! 'tis time to go. The eastern horizon bows before the sun, the air colours delicate pink, and the very tombstones in the graveyard blush for sympathy. The sparrows have been awake for an hour past; and up aloft the clouds;

which wander ceaselessly over the face of the earth, alighting only on lonely mountain tops, are tinted into rainbow-quarries by the glorious spectacle.

### III.

#### *A MAY MORNING.*

KING ARTHUR, in his Bohemian days, carried an adamantine shield, the gift of some fairy relative ; not only was it impenetrable, but so intolerable was its lustre, it overthrew all foes before the lance's point could reach them. Observing this, the chivalric monarch had a cover made for it, which he never removed save in the face of superhuman odds.

Here is an analogy. The imaginative reader may regard our enchanted facet mirror as too glaringly simple and direct a source of facts to suit the needs of a professed romance. Be there left—he would say—some room for fancy and even for conjecture : let the author seem occasionally to consult with his companion—gracefully to defer to his judgment. Bare state-

ment—the parade of indisputable evidence—is well enough in law, but appears ungente in a work of fiction.

How just is this mild censure! how gladly are its demands conceded! Let dogmatism retire, and blossom, flowers of fancy, on your yielding stems! Henceforward the reader is our confidential counsellor. We will pretend that our means of information are no better than other writers'. We will uniformly revel in speculation, and dally with imaginative delights. And only when hard-pressed for the true path will we snatch off the veil, and let forth, for a moment, a redeeming ray.

In this generous mood we pass through the partition between 27 and 29. In the matter of bedchambers—even hotel bedchambers—there can be great diversity. The one we were in just now was close and unwholesome, and wore an air of feverishness and disorder. Here, on the contrary, the air is fresh and brisk, for the



breeze from Boston harbour (slightly flavoured, it is true, by its journey across the northern part of the city) has been blowing into the room all night long. Here are trunks and carpet bags, well be-pasted with the names of foreign towns and countries, famous and infamous. One of the trunks is a bathing-tub, fitted with a cover,—an agreeable promise of refreshment amidst the dust and weariness of travel. A Russia-leather travelling-bag lies open on the table, disgorging an abundant armament of brushes and combs, and various toilet niceties. Mr Helwyse must be a dandy!

Cheek by jowl with the haversack lies a cylindrical case of the same kind of leather, with a strap attached to it, to sling over the shoulder. This perhaps contains a telescope. It would not be worth mentioning, save that our prophetic vision sees it coming into use by and by. Not to analyse too closely, everything in this room speaks of life, health, and

movement. In spite of smallness, bareness and angularity, it is fit for a May morning to enter in it, and expand to full-grown day.

It is now about half-past four, and the crisp new sunshine, just above ground, has clambered over the window-sill, taken a flying leap across the narrow floor, and is chuckling full in the agreeable face asleep upon the pillow. The face—feeling the warmth, and conscious through its closed eyelids of the light, presently stretches its eyebrows : then blinks : and finally yawns—Ah-h !—Thirty-two even white teeth in perfect order : a great red healthy tongue, and a round mellow roar, the parting remonstrance of the sleepy god, taking flight for the day. Thereupon a voice, fetched from some profounder source than the back of the head :—

“Stew-ard ! bring me my—Oh ! a land-lubber again, am I !”

Mr Balder Helwyse now sits up in bed, his hair and beard (which are amazingly long and

luxuriant, and will be treated at greater length hereafter) his hair and beard in the wildest confusion. He stares about him with a pair of well-opened dark eyes, which contrast strangely with his fair northern complexion. Next comes a spasmodic stretching of arms and legs, a whisking of bed-clothes, and the solid thump of two feet upon the floor. Another survey of the room, ending with a deep breathing-in of the fresh air, and an appreciative smacking of the lips.

“ O nose, eyes, ears,—all my godlike senses and faculties ! what a sensation is this of mother earth at sunrise. Better, seems to me, than ocean, beloved of my Scandinavian forefathers. Hear those birds ! look at those divine trees,—the tall moist grass growing round them ! By my head ! living is a glorious business. What, ho ! slave, empty me here yon bath-tub, and then ring the bell ! ”

The slave (a handsome handy fellow, unusu-

ally docile, inseparable from his master, whose life-long bondsman he was, and so much like him in many ways—owing perhaps to the intimacy always subsisting between the two—that he had more than once been confounded with him)—this obedient menial—

No! not even for a moment will we mislead our reader. Are we not sworn confidants! What is he to think, then, of this abrupt introduction, unheralded, unexplained! Be it at once confessed that Mr Helwyse travelled alone and unattended—that there was no slave or other person of any kind in the room—and that this high-sounding order of his was a mere ebullition of his peculiar humour.

He was a philosopher, and was in the habit of making many of his tenets minister to his amusement, when in his more sportive and genial moods. Not to exhaust his characteristics too early, it need only be observed here, that he held body and soul to be distinct, and so far

antagonistic that one or other must be master ; furthermore, that the soul's was the more desirable supremacy. Whether it were also invariable and uncontested, there will be opportunity of finding out later. Meantime, this dual condition was productive of not a little harmless entertainment to Mr Helwyse, at times when persons less happily constituted would have become victims of listlessness. Be the conditions what they might, he was never without a companion whose ways he knew, and whom he was yet never weary of questioning and studying. No subject so dull that its different aspects, as viewed from soul and from body, would not give it piquancy. No question so trivial that its discussion on material and on spiritual grounds would not lend it importance. Nor was any enjoyment so keen, or sorrow so poignant, as not to be enhanced by the contrast of its physical with its spiritual phase.

Awaking, therefore, on this May morning,

and being in a charming humour, this young man chose to look upon himself as the proprietor of a body-servant, and gave his orders with patrician imperiousness. The obedient menial then—to resume the thread—sprang at the throat of the tub-trunk, whipped off the lid, and discharged the contents upon the bed in a twinkling. This done, he stepped to the bell-rope, and lent it a vigorous jerk, soon answered by a brisk tapping at the door.

“ Please, sir, did you ring ? ”

“ Indeed, I did, my dear ! are you the pretty chambermaid ? ”

This bold venture is met by silence, modified only by a low delighted giggle. Presently—  
“ Did you want anything, sir, please ? ”

“ Ever so many things, my girl,—more than my life is long enough to tell ! First, though, I want to apologise to you for addressing you from behind a closed door ; but circumstances which are neither to be explained nor overcome

forbid my opening it. Next, two pails full of the best cold water at your earliest convenience. Quick now—there's a Hebe ! ”

“ Very good, sir ! ” giggles Hebe, retreating down the passage.

It is to be supposed that it was the plebeian body-servant who carried on this unideal conversation, and that the patrician soul had nothing to do with it. The ability to lay the burden of lapses from good taste and from other goods upon the shoulders of the flesh, is sometimes convenient and comforting.

Balder Helwyse, master and man, turns away from the door, and in so doing, catches sight of a white-robed, hairy-headed spectre in the looking-glass, the phantom face of which at once expands in a genial expression of mirth ; an impalpable arm is stretched forth, and the mouth seems thus to speak :

“ Stick to your bath, my good fellow, and the evil things of this life shall not get hold of you !

Water is like truth,—purifying, transparent,—tonic to those fouled and wearied with the dust and vanity of this transitional phenomenon called the world. Patronise it ! be thy acquaintance with it constant and familiar ! Remember, my dear Balder, that this slave of thine is the medium through which something better than he (thyself namely), is filtered to the world, and the world to thee. Go to then ! if the filter be foul, shall not that which is filtered become unclean also ? ”

Here the rhetorical phantom was interrupted by the sound of a very good violin, touched with unusual skill, in the next room, The phantom vanished, but Mr Helwyse seated himself softly upon the bed, listening with full enjoyment to every note, his very toes seeming to partake of his appreciation. Music is the mysterious power which makes body and soul—master and man—thrill as one string. The musician played several bars, beautiful in them-



selves but unconnected, and ever and anon there sounded a discordant note, like a smirch upon a fair picture. The execution, however, showed a master hand, and the themes betrayed the soul of a true musician, albeit tainted with some subtle deformity.

“ Heard him last night, and fell asleep dreaming of a man with the brain of a devil and an angel’s heart ! Will drop in on him presently and have him down to breakfast. If young, shall be our brother—so long as there’s anything in him. If—as I partly suspect—old, and a father—marry his daughter. But no—such a fiddler as he cannot be married, unless unhappily.” Mr Helwyse runs his hands dreamily through his tangled mane, and shakes it back. If philosophical, he seems also to be romantic and imaginative, and impressionable by other personalities. It is unfair, to be sure, to judge a man from the testimony of such unconsidered words as he may let fall during

the first half hour after waking up in the morning : otherwise we should infer that though he might take a genuine interest in whomever he meets, it would be too analytical to last long, except where the vein was a very rich one. He would pick the kernel out of the nut, but, that done, would feel no sentimental interest in the shell. Too much of this ; and yet who can help drawing conclusions (and not always incorrectly) from the first sight and sound of a new acquaintance ?

There is a knock at the door, and Mr Helwyse calls out, " hullo ? Ah ! the cold water, emblem of truth. Thank you, Hebe ! and scamper away as fast as you can, for I'm going to open the door ! "

We also will retire, fastidious reader, and employ the leisure interval in packing an imaginary portmanteau for a short journey. The main business during the next few days is with Mr Helwyse, and since there will be no

telling what becomes of him after that, he must be followed up pretty closely. A few days does not seem much for getting a satisfactory knowledge of a man; nevertheless an hour rightly used may be ample. If he will continue his habit of thinking aloud, will affect situations tending to bring out his leading traits of character; if we may intrude upon him, note-book in hand, in all his moods and crises;—with all this in addition to discretionary use of the magic mirror—it will be our own fault if Mr Helwyse be not turned inside out! Properly speaking, there is no mystery about men, but only a great dullness and lethargy in our perceptions of them. The secret of the universe is no more a secret than is the answer to a school-boy's problem. A mathematician will draw you a triangle and a circle, and show you the trigonometricalsciencelatent therein. But a profounder mathematician would do as much with the equation man!

While Mr Helwyse is still lingering over the

elaboration of his toilet, his neighbour, the fiddler, whom he had meant to ask to breakfast, comes out of his room, violin-box in hand, and is off down stairs. An odd-looking figure ! those stylish clothes become him as little as they would a long-limbed angular Egyptian statue. Fashion is in some men an eccentricity, or rather a violence done to their essential selves. A born fop would have looked as little at home in a toga and sandals, as did this swarthy musician, doctor, priest, or whatever he was, in his fashionable costume. Then why did he wear it ?

There are other things to be followed up before attending to that question. But the man is gone, and Balder Helwyse has missed the opportunity of making his acquaintance. Had he been an hour earlier—had any one of us for that matter been an hour earlier or later ! who can tell how the destinies of the world would be affected ? Luckily for our peace of mind the hypothesis involves an impossibility.

#### IV.

##### *A BRAHMAN.*

WHOEVER has been in Boston remembers or has seen the old Beacon Hill Bank, which stood—not on Beacon Hill indeed—but in that part of School Street now occupied by the great City Hall. You passed down by the dirty old church on the north-east corner of School and Tremont Streets, which stands trying to hide its ugly face behind a row of columns like sooty fingers, and whose School Street side is quite bare and has the distracted appearance peculiar to buildings erected on an incline:—passing this, you came in sight of the Bank, a darksome respectable edifice of brick, two-and-a-half stories high and gambrel-roofed. It stood a little back from the street, much as an antiquated aristocrat might withdraw himself

from the stream of modern life and fancy himself exclusive. The poor old Bank! Its respectable brick walls have contributed a few rubbish heaps to the new land in Back-bay, perhaps; and its floors and gambrel-roof have long since vanished up somebody's chimney; only its money—its baser part,—still survives and circulates! Aristocracy and exclusivism do not pay now.

The Bank, perhaps, took its title from the fact that it owed its chief support to the old Beacon Hill families—Boston's aristocracy: and Boston's standard names appeared on its list of managers. If business led you that way, you mounted the well-worn steps and entered the rather strict and formal door, over which clung the weather-worn sign—faded gold lettering on a rusty black back-ground. Nothing that met your eyes looked new, although everything was scrupulously neat. Opposite the doorway a flight of wooden stairs mounted

to the next floor, where were the musty offices of some old Puritan lawyers. Leaving the stairs on your left, you passed down a dusky passage, and through a glass door: when behold! the banking-room with its four grave bald-headed clerks. But you came not to draw or deposit, your business was with the President. "Mr MacGentle in?" "That way, sir." You opened a door with "Private" painted in black letters upon the ground-glass panel. Another bald-headed gentleman, with a grim determination about the mouth, rose up from his table and barred your way. This was Mr Dyke, the breakwater against which the waves of would-be intruders into the inner seclusion, often broke themselves in vain; unless you had a genuine pass, your expedition ended there.

Our pass (for we, too, are to call on Mr MacGentle) would carry us through solidier obstructions than Mr Dyke; it is the pass of imagina-

tion. He does not so much as raise his head as we brush by him.

But first let us inquire who (besides President of the Beacon Hill Bank) this Mr MacGentle is. He is a man of cultivation and refinement, a scholar and a reader : he has travelled, and it is said can handle a pen to better purpose than the signing bank-notes. In his earlier years he studied Law, and gained a certain degree of distinction in the profession ; although (owing perhaps to his having entered it with too ideal and high-strung views as to its nature and scope) he never met with what is vulgarly called success. Luckily for the ideal barrister, an ample private estate made him independent of professional earnings. Later in life he trod the confines of politics, still, however, enveloping himself in that theoretical, unpractical atmosphere which was his most marked, and to some people most incomprehensible characteristic. A certain mild halo of statesmanship ever after



invested him; not that he had at any time actually borne a share in the government of the nation, but it was understood that he might have done so had he so chosen, or had his political principles been tough and elastic enough to endure the wear and strain of action. As it was, some of the most renowned men in the Senate were known to have been his intimates at College, and he still met and conversed with them on terms of equality.

Between law, literature and statesmanship, in all which pursuits he had acquired respect and goodwill without actually accomplishing anything,—Mr MacGentle seated himself, no one knew exactly why, in the presidential chair of the Beacon Hill Bank. No sooner was he there than everybody saw that there he belonged. His social position, his culture, his honourable, albeit intangible, record, suited the old Bank well. He had an air of subdued wisdom, and people were fond of appealing to his

judgment and asking his advice—perhaps because he never seemed to expect them to follow it when given (as indeed they seldom did). The Board of Directors looked up to him, deferred to him, nay, believed him to be as necessary to the Bank's existence as the entire aggregate of its supporters. But neither the Board nor, what was more remarkable, the President himself, ever dreamed of adopting Mr MacGentle's financial theories, in the conduct of the banking business.

Let no one hastily infer that the accomplished gentleman of whom we speak was in any sense a sham. No one could be more true to himself and to his professions. But, if we may hazard a conjecture, he never breathed the air that other men breathed; another sun than ours shone for him; the world that answered to his senses was not our world. His life, in short, was not human life, yet, so closely like it that the two might be said to correspond as a face

to its reflection in the mirror : actual contact being in both cases alike impossible. No doubt the world and he knew of the barrier between them, though neither said so. The former, with its usual happy temperament, was little affected by the separation, smiled good-naturedly upon the latter, and never troubled itself about the difficulties in the way of shaking hands. But Mr MacGentle, being only a single individual, perhaps felt lonely and sad. Either he was a ghost, or the world was. In youth he may have believed himself to be the only real flesh and blood ; but in later years the terrible weight of the world's majority against him forced him to the opposite conclusion. And here at last were he and the world at one!

Suppose, instead of listening to a description of this good old gentleman's person, we take a look at him with our own eyes? There is no danger of disturbing him, however busy he may

be. The inner retreat is very small, and as neat as though an old maid lived in it. The furniture looks as good as new, but is subdued to a tone of sober maturity, and chimes in so well with the general effect that one scarcely notices it. The polished table is mounted in dark morocco; behind the horse-hair-covered arm-chair is a grey marble mantel-piece, overshadowing an open grate with polished bars and fire utensils in the English style. During the winter months a lump of Cannel coal is always burning there; but the flame, even on the coldest days, is too much on its good behaviour to give out a very decided heat. Over the mantel-piece hangs a crayon copy of Correggio's Reading Magdalene, the only touch of sentiment in the room, and that perhaps accidental!

The concrete nature of the President's surroundings is at first perplexing, in view of our theory about his character. But it must be evident that the world could never provide him

with furniture corresponding to the texture of his mind ; and hence he would instinctively lay hold of whatever was most common-place and non-committal. If he could realise nothing outside himself, he might at least remove whatever would distract him from inward contemplation. There is, however, one article in this little room which we must not omit to notice. It is a looking-glass, and it hangs—of all places in the world—right over Mr MacGentle's standing desk, in the embrasure of the window. As often as he looks up he beholds the reflection of his cultured and sad-lined physiognomy, with a glimpse of dusky wall beyond. Is he a vain man ? His worst enemy (had he one) would not call him that. Nevertheless, Mr MacGentle takes a pathetic comfort in this small mirror. No one, not even himself, could tell wherefore ; but we fancy it to be like that an exile feels in seeing a picture of his birth-place, or hearing a strain of his native music. The

mirror shows him something more real, to his sense, than is anything outside of it!

And there stands the old gentleman writing at this desk in the window. All men, it has been said, bear more or less resemblance to some animal: Mr MacGentle, tall and rather slender, with a slight stoop, and a black broad-cloth frock-coat buttoned closely round his waist,—brings to mind a refined grandfatherly greyhound upon its hind legs. He has thick white hair, with a gentle curl in it, growing all over his finely-moulded head. He is close-shaven; his mouth and nose are chiselled with great delicacy; his eyes, now somewhat faded, yet show an occasional reminiscence of youthful fire. The eyebrows are habitually lifted—a result possibly of the growing infirmity of Mr MacGentle's vision; but it produces an expression of half-plaintive resignation, which is rendered pathetic by the wrinkles across the forehead and the dejected lines about the delicate mouth.

He is dressed with faultless nicety and elegance, though in a fashion now out of date. Perhaps, in graceful recognition of the advance of age, he has adhered to the style in vogue when age first began to weigh upon his shoulders. He gazes mildly out from the embrasure of an upright collar and tall stock; below spreads a wide expanse of spotless shirt-front. His trousers are always grey, except in the height of summer, when they become snowy white. They are uniformly too long, yet he never dispenses with straps, nor with the gaiters that crown his gentlemanly shoes.

Although not a stimulating companion, one loves to be where Amos MacGentle is,—to watch his quiet movements and listen to his meditative talk. What he says often bears the stamp of thought and intellectual capacity, and at first, strikes the listener as rare good sense. Yet, if reconsidered afterwards, or applied to the practical tests of life, his wisdom



is apt to fall mysteriously short ! Is Mr MacGentle aware of this curious fact ? There is sometimes a sadly humorous curving of the lips and glimmering in the eyes, after he has uttered something especially profound, which almost warrants the supposition. The lack of accord between the old gentleman and the world has become to him, at last, a grave sort of jest !

But we might continue forever touching the elusive chords of Mr MacGentle's being ; one cannot help loving him, or if he be not real enough to love, bestowing upon him such affection as is inspired by some gentle symphony. Unfortunately, he figures but little in the coming pages, and in no active part ; such, indeed, were unsuited to him. But it is pleasant to have passed through his retired little office on our way to scenes less quiet and subdued ; and we would gladly look forward to seeing him once more, when the heat of the day is over and the sun has gone down.



## V.

### *A NEW MAN WITH AN OLD FACE.*

ABOUT an hour before noon on this same 27th of May, Mr Dyke heard a voice in the outer room. He had held his position as confidential clerk in the house for nearly, or quite twenty-five years, was blessed with a sound memory, and was fond of saying that he never forgot a face or a voice. So, as this voice from the outer room reached his ears, he turned up one eye towards the door, and muttered,

“ Heard that before, somewhere ! ”

The ground-glass panel darkened, and the door was thrown wide open. Upon the threshold stood a young man, about six feet in height, of figure more graceful and harmonious than massive. A black velvet jacket fitted closely to his shape ; he wore a Tyrolese hat ;

his boots, of fine pliant leather, reached above the knee. He carried a stout cane with a handle of chamois horn : to a couple of straps crossing each shoulder, were attached a travelling-bag and a telescope case.

But neither his attire, nor the unusual size and dark brilliancy of his eyes, was so noticeable as his hair and beard, which outgrew the bounds of ordinary experience. Beards, to be sure, were far more rare twenty years ago than they have since become. The hair was yellow, with the true hyacinthine curl pervading it. Rejoicing in luxuriant might, it clothed and reclothed the head, and descending lower, tumbled itself in bold masses on the young man's shoulders. As for the beard, it was well in keeping ; of a purer yellow than the hair, it twisted down in crisp vigorous waves below the point marked by mankind's third shirt-stud. It was more than half as broad as it was long, and lay to the right and left from

the centre-line of the face. The owner of this oriflamme resembled a young Scandinavian god.

There seems to be a deeper significance in hair than meets the eye ! Sons of Esau, whose beards grow high up on their cheek bones—who are hairy down to their ankles, and to the second joints of their fingers,—are generally men of a kindly and charitable nature, strong in what we call the human element. You remember their stout hand-grip ; they look frankly in your face ; and the heart is apt to go out to them, more spontaneously than to the smooth-faced Jacobs. Such a man was Samson, whose hair was his strength—the strength of inborn truth and goodness, whereby he was enabled to smite the lying Philistines. And though once by their sophistries they managed to get the better of him for a while, they forgot that good inborn is too vigorous a matter for any mere razor finally to subdue. See, again, what a great beard Saint Paul had, and what an

outspoken vigorous heart ! Was it from freak that Greeks and Easterns revered beards as symbols of manhood, dignity, and wisdom ? or that Christian fathers thundered against the barber as a violater of divine law ? No one surely could accuse that handy, oily, easy little personage of evil intent ; but he symbolised the subtle principle which pares away the natural virtue of man, and substitutes an artificial polish which is hypocrisy ! It is to be observed, however, that hair can be representative of natural evil as well as of good. A tangle-headed bushranger does not win our sympathies. A Mussulman keeps his beard religiously clean.

Meanwhile the yellow-haired Scandinavian, whom we have already laid under the imputation of being a dandy, stood on the threshold of Mr Dyke's office, and that gentleman confronted him with a singularly inquisitive stare. The visitor's face was a striking one, but can

be described at present only in general terms. He might not be called handsome, yet a very handsome man would be apt to appear insignificant beside him. His features showed strength, and were at the same time cleanly and finely cut. There was freedom in the arch of his eyebrows, and plenty of eyeroom beneath them.

He took off his hat to Mr Dyke, and smiled upon him with artless superiority, insomuch that the elderly clerk's sixty years were disconcerted, and the cerberus seemed to dwindle into the bumpkin ! This young fellow, a good deal less than half Mr Dyke's age, was yet a far older man of the world than he. Not that his appearance suggested the kind of maturity which results from abnormal or distorted development ; on the contrary, he was thoroughly genial and healthful. But that power and assurance of eye and lip, generally bought only at the price of many years buffetings given and

taken, were here wedded to the first flush and vigour of young manhood.

“ My name is Helwyse ; I have come from Europe to see Mr Amos MacGentle,” said the visitor courteously.

“ Helwyse—Hel— !” repeated Mr Dyke, having seemingly quite forgotten himself. His customary manner to strangers implied that he knew, better than they did, who they were, and what they wanted ; and that what he knew was not much to their credit. But he could only open his mouth and stare at this Helwyse.

“ Mr MacGentle is an old friend ; run in and tell him I’m here, and you will see.” The young man put his hand kindly on the elderly clerk’s shoulder, much as though the latter were a gaping schoolboy, and directed him gently towards the inner door.

Mr Dyke recovered his voice by an effort, though still lacking complete self-command. “ I beg your pardon, Mr Helwyse, Sir,—of

course, of course—it didn't seem possible—so long, you know—but I remembered the voice, and the face, and the name—I never forget—but, by George ! Sir, can you really be—— ? ”

“ I see you have a good memory ; you're Dyke, aren't you ? ” and Helwyse threw back his head and laughed, at the clerk's bewildered face perhaps. At all events, the latter laughed too, and they both shook hands cordially.

“ Beg pardon again, Mr Helwyse, Sir—will speak to the President,” said the subdued breakwater, and stepped into the sanctuary of sanctuaries.

Mr MacGentle was taking a nap. He was seventy years old, and dropped asleep easily. When he slept, however lightly and briefly, he was pretty sure to dream ; and, if awakened suddenly, his dream would often prolong itself and mingle with passing events, which would themselves put on the semblance of unreality. On the present occasion, the sound of Helwyse's

voice had probably crept through the door and insinuated itself into his dreaming brain.

Mr Dyke was too much flustered to remark the President's condition. Putting his mouth close to the old gentleman's ear, he said in an emphatic and penetrating undertone,—

“Here's your old friend Helwyse, who died in Europe two years ago, come back again, *younger than ever!*”

If the confidential clerk expected his superior to echo his own bewilderment, he was disappointed. Amos MacGentle unclosed his eyes, looked up, and answered rather peevishly,—

“What nonsense are you talking about his dying in Europe, Mr Dyke? He hasn't been in Europe these six years. I was expecting him! Let him enter at once.”

But he was already there; and Mr Dyke stepped out with consternation written upon his solid features. Mr MacGentle found him-



self with his thin old hand in the young man's warm grasp.

" Helwyse, how do you do ?—how do you do ? Ah ! you look as well as ever. I was just thinking about you. Sit down—sit down ! "

The old President's voice had a strain of melancholy in it, partly the result of chronic asthma, and partly, no doubt of a melancholic temperament. This strain being constant, had sometimes a curiously incongruous effect as contrasted with the subject or circumstances in hand. Whether hailing the dawn of the millennium, holding playful converse with a child, making an address to the Board,—under whatever rhetorical conditions, Mr MacGentle's intonation was always pitched in the same murmurous and somewhat plaintive key. Moreover, a corresponding immobility of facial expression had grown upon him, so that altogether, though he was the most sympathetic and sensitive of men, a superficial observer might take him to

be lacking in the common feelings and impulses of humanity.

Perhaps the incongruity alluded to had not altogether escaped his own notice, and since discord of any kind pained him, he had mended the matter as best he could, by surrendering himself entirely to his mournful voice!—allowing it to master his gestures, choice of language, almost his thoughts. The result was a colourlessness of manner which did great injustice to the gentle and delicate soul behind.

This conjecture might explain why Mr Mac-Gentle (instead of falling upon his friend's neck and shedding tears of welcome there) only uttered a few commonplace sentences, and then drooped back in his chair. But how to account for his remark about having expected the arrival of a friend who, it would appear, had been two years dead? Helwyse may himself have been puzzled by this: or, being a quick-witted young man, he may have divined its explanation. He

looked at his entertainer with critical sympathy, not untinged with humour.

“ I hope you are as well as I am ! ” said he.

“ A little tired this morning, I believe. I never was so strong a man as you, Helwyse. I think I must have passed a bad night. I remember dreaming I was an old man—an old man with white hair, Helwyse ! ”

“ Were you glad to wake up again ? ” asked the young man, meeting the elder’s faded eyes.

“ I hardly know whether I’m quite awake yet. And, after all, Thor, I’m not sure that I don’t wish the dream might have been true. Were I really an old man, what a long lonely future I should escape ! But as it is—as it is—.”

He relapsed into revery. Ah ! Amos Mac-Gentle, are you again the tall and graceful youth, full of romance and fire, who once roamed the world in quest of adventures, with your trusty friend, Thor Helwyse, the yellow-bearded Scandinavian ? Do you fancy this fresh

unwrinkled face a mate to your own? And is it but the vision of a restless night—this long-drawn life of dull routine and gradual disappointment and decay? Open those dim eyes of yours, good Sir! stir those thin old legs! inflate that sunken chest! Ha! is that cough imaginary? those trembling muscles—are they a delusion? is that misty glance only a momentary weakness? There is no youth left in you, Mr MacGentle—not so much as would keep a rose in bloom for an hour!

“Have you seen Doctor Glyphic lately?” enquired Balder Helwyse, after a pause.

“Hiero? do you know I was thinking of him too just now—of our first meeting with him in the African desert? You remember! a couple of Bedouins were carrying him off—they had captured him on his way to some apocryphal ruin among the sand heaps. What a grand moment was that when you caught the sheik round the throat with your umbrella-han-

dle, and pulled him off his horse! and then we mounted poor Glyphic upon it, mummied cat and all, and away over the hot sand! What a day was that! What a day was that!”

The speaker's eyes had kindled: for a moment one saw the far flat desert, the struggling knot of men and horses, the stampede of the three across the plain, and the high sun flaming inextinguishable laughter over all. And it had happened nigh forty years ago!

“He never forgot that service,” resumed Mr MacGentle, his customary plaintive manner returning. “To that, and to your saving that Egyptian lad, Manetho, you owe your wife, Helen. . . . ah! forgive me—I had forgotten—she is dead—she is dead!”

“I never could understand,” remarked Helwyse, aiming to lead the conversation away from gloomy topics, “why the Doctor made so much of Manetho.”

“That was only a phase of the Egyptian

mania that possessed him, and began, you know, with his changing his name from Henry to Hiero ; and has gone on, until now, I suppose he actually believes himself to be some old inscription, containing precious secrets not to be found elsewhere. Before the adventure with the boy, I remember, he had formed the idea of building a miniature Egypt in New Jersey : and Manetho served well as the living human element in it. ‘ Though I take him to America,’ you know he said, ‘ he shall still live in Egypt! He shall have a temple and an altar and Isis and Orisis, and papyri, and palm-trees, and—a crocodile : and when he dies I will embalm him like a Pharaoh !’ ‘ But what if you die first ?’ said one of us. ‘ Then he shall embalm me!’ cried Hiero, ‘ and I will be the first American mummy!’ ”

Mr MacGentle seemed to find a dreamy enjoyment in working this vein of reminiscence. He sat back in his low arm-chair, his unsub-

stantial face turned meditatively towards the Magdalene, his hands brought together to support his delicate chin. Helwyse, apprehending that the vein might at last bring the dreamer down to the present day, encouraged him to follow it.

“It must have been a disappointment to the Doctor that his protégé took up the Christian religion, instead of following the faith and rites of his Egyptian ancestors for the last five thousand years!”

“Why, perhaps it was, Thor, perhaps it was!” murmured Mr MacGentle. “But Manetho never entered the pulpit, you know; it would not have been to his interest to do so; besides that I fancy he is really devoted to Glyphic, believing that it was he who saved him from the crocodile. People are all the time making such absurd mistakes! Manetho is a man who would be unalterable either in gratitude or in enmity—although his external manner is so mild.

And as to his taking orders—why, so long as he wore an Egyptian robe, and said his prayers in an Egyptian temple, it would be all the same to Glyphic what religion the man professed.”

“ Doctor Glyphic is still alive, then ? ”

The old man looked at the young one with an air half-perplexed, half-apprehensive, as if scenting the far approach of some undefined difficulty. He passed his white hand across his forehead.

“ Everything seems out of joint to-day, Helwyse. Nothing looks or seems natural—except you ! What is the matter with me—what is the matter with me ? ”

Helwyse sat with both hands twisted in his mighty beard, and one booted leg thrown across the other. He was full of sympathy at the spectacle of poor Amos MacGentle, blindly groping after the phantom of a flower whose bloom and fragrance had vanished so terribly long ago : and yet, for some reason or other, he



could hardly forbear a smile. Anything utterly out of place (as Mr MacGentle was just now) is no more pathetic than absurd; moreover, young men are always secretly inclined to laugh at old ones!

“Why should not Glyphic be alive?” continued Mr MacGentle. “Why not he, as well as you or I? Are we not all about an age?”

Helwyse drew his chair close to his companion's, and took his hand, as if it had been a young girl's.

“My dear friend,” said he, “you said you felt tired this morning, but you forget how far you've travelled since we last met. Doctor Glyphic, if he be living now, must be more than sixty years old! Your dream of old age was such as many have dreamed before, and not awakened from in this world!”

“Let me think—let me think!” said the old man; and Helwyse drawing back there ensued a silence, varied only by a long and tremulous

sigh from his companion; whether of relief or dejection the visitor could not decide. But when Mr MacGentle spoke again, it was with more assurance. Either from mortification at his illusion, or more probably from imperfect perception of it, he made no reference to what had passed. Old age possesses a kind of composure, arising from dulled sensibilities, which the most self-possessed youth can never rival.

“We heard, through the London branch of our house, that Thor Helwyse died some two years ago.”

“Drowned in the Baltic Sea! I am his son Balder.”

“He was my friend,” observed the old man, simply: but the tone he used was a magnet to attract the son’s heart. “You look very much like him, only his eyes were blue, and yours, as I now see, are dark; but you might be mistaken for him.”

"I sometimes have been!" rejoined Balder, with a half-smile.

"And you are his son: you are most welcome!" continued the other, with old-fashioned courtesy. "Forgive me if I have—if anything has occurred to annoy you. I am a very old man, Mr Balder, so old that I believe I sometimes forget how old I am! And Thor is dead—drowned, you say?"

"The Baltic Sea, you know, has been the grave of many of our forefathers. I think my father was glad to follow them. I never saw him in better spirits than during that gale. We were bound to England from Denmark."

"Helen's death saddened him—I know—I know! He never was the same after that. But how—how did——?"

"He would keep the deck, though the helmsman had to be lashed to the wheel. I think he never cared to see land again; but he was

full of spirits and life. He said this was weather for a viking.

“We were standing by the main-mast, holding on by a belaying-pin. The sea came over the side and struck him overboard. I went after him. Another wave brought me back—but not my father! I was knocked senseless, and when I came to, it was too late.”

Helwyse's voice, towards the end of this story, became husky; and Mr MacGentle's eyes, as he listened, grew dimmer than ever.

“Ah!—I shall not die so,” said he. “I shall die away gradually, like a breeze that has been blowing this way and that all day, and falls at sunset no one knows how. Thor died as became him,—and I shall die as becomes me—as becomes me!” And so, indeed, he did, a few years later; but not unknown nor uncared for.

Balder Helwyse was a philosopher no doubt; but it was no part of his wisdom to be

indifferent to unstrained sympathy. He went on to speak further of his own concerns—a thing he was little used to do.

It appeared that from the time he first crossed the Atlantic—being then about four years old—up to the time he had left Europe a few weeks ago, he had been journeying to and fro over the eastern hemisphere. His father (who as well as himself, was American by birth) was the descendant of a Danish family of high station and antiquity, and inherited the restless spirit of his ancestors. In the course of his early wanderings, he had fallen in with Mac-Gentle, who, though somewhat older than Helwyse, was still a young man: and later, these two had encountered Hiero Glyphic. About fifteen years after this it was that Thor appeared at Glyphic's house in New Jersey, and was welcomed by that singular man as a brother; and here he fell in love with Glyphic's sister, Helen, and married her. With her, he

received a respectable fortune, which the addition of his own made ample, and it was understood that at Glyphic's death, Thor or his heirs would inherit the bulk of the estate left by him.

So Thor, being then in the first prime of life, was prepared to settle down and become domestic. But the sudden death of his wife, and the subsequent loss of one of the children she had borne him, drove him once more abroad, with his baby-son, never again to take root or to return. And here Balder's story, as told by him, began. He seemed to have matured very early, and to have taken hold of knowledge in all its branches like a Titan. The precise age at which he had learned all that the European schools could teach him, it is not necessary to specify; since it is more with the nature of his mind than with the list of his accomplishments, that we shall have to do. It might be possible, by tracing his connection

with French, English, or German philosophers, to make shrewd guesses at the quality of his own creed ; but this will perhaps reveal itself less diffidently under other tests.

The latter four or five years of his life Balder had spent in acquiring such culture as schools could not give him. Where he went, what he did and saw, we shall not exercise our power categorically to reveal : remarking merely that his means and social rank left him free to go both as high and as low as he pleased : to dine with English dukes or with Russian serfs. But a fine chastity inherent to his northern blood had (whatever were his moral convictions) kept him from the mire ; and the sudden death of his father had given him a graver turn than was normal to his years. Meanwhile, the financial crash which at this time so largely affected Europe, swallowed almost the whole of Balder's fortune ; and with the residue (about a thousand pounds sterling), and a potential

independence, in the shape of a learned profession, in his head,—he sailed for Boston.

“ I knew you were my Uncle Hiero’s bankers,” he added, “ and I supposed you would be able to tell me about him. He is my only living relative.”

“ Why, as to that, I believe it is a long time since the bank has had anything to do with his concerns,” returned the venerable president, abstractedly gazing at Balder’s high boots. “ But I’ll ask Mr Dyke. He remembers everything ! ”

That gentleman (who had not passed an easy moment since Mr Helwyse’s arrival) was now called in, and his suspense regarding the mysterious visitor soon relieved. In respect to Doctor Glyphic’s affair, he was ready and explicit.

“ No dollar of his money has been through our hands since winter of 1835-6, Mr Helwyse, Sir: winter following your respected father’s



departure for foreign parts," stated Mr Dyke, straightening his mouth and planting his fist on his hip.

"Hm—hm!" murmured the president, standing thin and bent before the empty fire-place, a coat-tail over each arm.

"You have heard nothing of him since then?"

"Nothing, Mr Helwyse, Sir! Reverend Manetho Glyphic—understood to be the Doctor's adopted son—came here and effected the transfer,—under authority, of course, of his foster-father's signature. Where the property is at this moment, how invested, with what returns—neither the President nor I can inform you, Sir!"

"Hm—hm!" was again President Mac-Gentle's remark. It was a favourite comment of his upon business topics.

"It is possible I may be a very wealthy man!" said Balder, when Mr Dyke had made

his resolute bow and departed. "But I really hope my uncle is alive. It would be a loss not to have known so eccentric a man. I have a miniature of him which I have often studied, so that I shall know him when we meet. Can he be married, do you think?"

"Why, no, Balder—no, I should hardly think so!" answered Mr MacGentle, who, at the departure of his confidential clerk, had relapsed into his unofficial manner and position. "By the way, do you contemplate that step?"

"It is said to be an impediment to great enterprises. I could learn little by domestic life that I could not learn better otherwise."

"Hm—we couldn't do without woman, you know!"

"If I could marry Woman I would do it!" said the young man unblushingly. "But a single crumb from that great loaf would be of no use to me."

"Ah, you haven't learned to appreciate

women ! You never knew your mother, Balder, and your sister was lost before she was old enough to be anything to you. By the way, I have always cherished a hope that she might yet be found. Perhaps she may—perhaps she may!”

Balder looked perplexed, till thinking the old gentleman might be referring to a reunion in a future state, he said,

“ You believe that people recognise one another in the next world, Mr MacGentle ? ”

“ Perhaps—perhaps ; but why not in this world as well ? ” murmured the other in reply : and Balder, suspecting a return of absent-mindedness, yielded the point. He had grown up in the belief that his twin sister had died in her infancy ; but his venerable friend appeared to be under a different impression.

“ I shall go to New York and try to find my uncle, or some trace of him,” he said. “ If I’m unsuccessful, I mean to come back to Boston, and settle as a physician.”

“What is your specialty?”

“I’m an eye doctor; the Boston people are not all clear-eyed, I hope?”

“Not all—I should say, not all! perhaps you may be able to help me, to begin with,” said Mr MacGentle with a gleam of melancholy humour.

“I will ask Mr Dyke about the chances for a practice—he knows everything. And, Balder,” he added, when the young man rose to go, “let me hear from you and see you again sometimes, whatever accident may happen to you in the way of fortune. I’m rather a lonely old man—a lonely old man, Balder!”

“I’ll be here again very soon, unless I get married, or commit a murder, or some such enormity,” rejoined Helwyse, his long moustache curving to his smile. They shook hands—the vigorous young god of the sun, and the faded old wraith of Brahmanism, with a friendly look into each other’s eyes.

## VI.

### *THE VAGARIES OF HELWYSE.*

BALDER HELWYSE was a man full of natural and healthy instincts, not afraid to laugh uproariously when so inclined, nor apt to counterfeit so much as a smile, only because a smile would look well. What showed a rarer audacity, he had more than once dared to weep! To crush down real emotions formed, in short, no part of his ideal of a man. Not belonging to the Little-pot-soon-hot family, he had perhaps never found occasion to go beyond the control of his temper, and blind rage he would in no wise allow himself; but he delighted in antagonisms, and though it came not within his rules to hate any man, he was inclined to cultivate an enemy, as more likely to be instructive than some friends. His love of actual battle was intense; he had

punched heads with many a hard-fisted English schoolboy ; high up on his forehead he bore the scar of a German Schlaeger ; and later, in Paris, he had deliberately invaded the susceptibilities of a French journalist, had followed him to the field of honour, and been there run through the body with a small-sword, to the satisfaction of both parties. He was confined to his bed for a while, but his overflowing spirits healed the wound to the admiration of his doctors.

These examples of self-indulgence have been touched upon only by way of preparing the gentle reader for a yet more serious shock. Helwyse was a disciple of Brillat-Savarin—in one word, a gourmand ! His appetite never failed him, and he knew how wisely to direct it. He never ate a careless or thoughtless meal, be its elements simple as they might. He knew, and was loved by the foremost cooks, all over Europe. Never did he allow coarseness or

intemperance to mar the refinement of his palate.

“Man,” he was accustomed to say, “is but a stomach, and the cook is the pope of stomachs, in whose church are no respectable heretics. Our happiness lies in his saucepan—at the mercy of his spit! Eating is the appropriation to our needs of the good and truth of life as existing in material manifestation: the cook is the high-priest of that symbolic ceremony! I, and kings with me, bow before him! But his is a responsibility beneath which Atlas might stagger: he before all men must be honest, warm-hearted, quick of sympathy, full of compassion towards his race. Let him rejoice, for the world extols him for its well-being! yet tremble! lest upon his head fall the curse of the world’s misery!”

This speech was always received with applause, the peroration being delivered with a vast controlled emphasis of eye and voice: and

it was followed by the drinking of the cook's health. "The generous virtues," Mr Helwyse would then go on to say, "arise from the cultivation of the stomach. Out of man's very earthliness springs the flower of his spiritual virtue. We affect to despise the flesh, as vile and unworthy. What then is flesh made of? of nothing?—let who can prove that! No, it is made of spirit—of the divine everlasting substance! it is the wall which holds heaven in place! If there be anything vile in it, it is of the Devil's infusion, and enters not into the argument!"

A man who had expressed such views as these at the most renowned tables of France and England, was not likely to forget his principles in the United States. Accordingly, he arose early, as we have seen, on the morning after his arrival, and compelled an astonished waiter to marshal him to the kitchen and introduce him to the cook. The cook of the Granite



Hotel at that time was a round, red-lipped Italian,—an artist and enthusiast; but his temper had been much tried by lack of appreciation: and, although his salary was good, he contemplated throwing it over, abandoning the Yankee nation to its fate, and seeking some more congenial field. Balder (who, when the mood was on him, could wield a tongue as persuasive as Richard the Third's) talked to this man, and in seven minutes won his whole heart. The immediate result was a delectable breakfast; but the sequel was a triumph indeed! It seems that the aesthetic Italian had for several days been watching over a brace of plump truffled partridges; this day had they reached perfection, and were to have been eaten by no less a person than the cook himself. These cherished birds did he now actually offer to make over to his eloquent and sympathetic acquaintance. Balder was deeply moved, and accepted the gift on one condition, that the

donor should share the feast! "When a man serves me up his own heart—truffled, too, he must help me eat it!" said he with emotion. The condition imposed was, after a faint resistance, agreed to: the other episodes of the Bill-of-fare were decided upon, and the Italian and the Scandinavian were to dine together that afternoon.

It still lacked something of the dinner-hour when Mr Helwyse came out through the dark passage-way of the Beacon Hill Bank, and paused for a few moments on the threshold, looking up and down the street. Against the dark back-ground he made a handsome picture, tall, gallant, unique! The May sunshine, falling athwart the face of the gloomy old building, was glad to light up the waves of his beard and hair, and to cast the shadow of his hat-brim over his forehead and eyes. The picture stays just long enough to fix itself in the memory, and then the young man goes lightly down the

worn steps, and is lost along the crowded street. Such as he is now, we shall not see him standing in that dark frame again!

Wherever he went Balder Helwyse was sure to be stared at, but to this he was admirably indifferent. He never thought of speculating about what people thought of Mr Helwyse. But to his own approval, something not lightly to be had, he was by no means indifferent. Towards mankind at large he showed a kindly but irreverent charity, excusing their imperfection not so much from a divine principle of love, as from scepticism as to man's sufficient motive or faculty to do well. Of himself, however, he was a blunt and sarcastic critic, perhaps because he expected more from that source than from the rest of the world, and fancied that himself only had ability to be his censor!

Should the Christian reader regard this mental attitude as unsound, far be it from us to defend it! It must, nevertheless, be admitted

that whoever feels the strong stirring of power in his head and hands, will learn its limits from no purely subjective source. The lesson must begin from without, and the only argument will be a deadly struggle. Until then, self-esteem, however veiled beneath the garb of self-criticism, cannot but increase. And if the man have had wisdom and strength to abstain from vulgar self-pollution, Satan must entrust his spear to no half-fledged devil, but grasp it in his own hand and join battle in his own person.

Undismayed by this fact, Helwyse reached Washington Street and followed its westerly meanderings, meaning to spend part of the interval before dinner in exploring Boston. He walked with an easy sideways-swaying of the shoulders, whisking his cane, and smiling to himself as he recalled the points of his interview with the President.

“Just the thing—to make MacGentle tutelary divinity of so elusive a matter as money!

wonder whether the Directors ever thought of that? For all his unreality, though, he has something more real in him than the heaviest Director on the Board!

“How composedly he took me for my father! and when he discovered his mistake, how composedly he welcomed me in my own person! Was that the extreme of senility? or was it a subtle assertion of the fact that he who keeps in the vanguard of the age, in a certain sense contains his father—the past—within himself: and is a distinct person chiefly by virtue of that containing power?

“Why didn’t I ask him more about my foster-cousin, Manetho? Egyptians are more astute than affectionate. Would he cleave to my poor uncle during these last eighteen years, merely for love? Why did he transfer that property so soon after we sailed? Ten to one he has in his own hands the future as well as the present disposal of Doctor Hiero Glyphic’s

fortune! The old gentleman has had time to make a hundred wills since the one he showed my father twenty years ago!

“Well, and what is that to you? Ah! Balder Helwyse, you lazy impostor, you are pining for Egyptian flesh-pots. Don’t tell me about civility to relatives and study of human nature! You are as bad as you accuse your poor cousin of being—who may be dead or pastor of a small parish, for all you know. And every school-girl can prattle of the educational uses of poverty and of having to make one’s living. I have a mind to take your thousand pounds sterling out of your pocket and throw them in Charles River—and then begin at the beginning. By the time I’d learnt what poverty can teach, it would be over—or I am no true man! Only they who are ashamed of themselves or afraid of other people need start rich.”

Nevertheless, he could not do otherwise than

hunt up the only relative he had in America. Subsequent events did not convict him of being a mere egotist swayed only by the current of base success. He did not despise prosperity, but he cared yet more to find out truth about things and men. This is not the story of a fortune-hunter: not, at all events, of a hunter of such fortunes as are made and lost now-a-days. But when one half a man detects unworthy motives in the other half, the situation is embarrassing. He acts most wisely, perhaps, who drops discussion, and lets the balance of good and evil at the given moment decide. Our compound life makes many compromises, whereby our progress, whether heavenward or hellward, is made slow—and sure.

Here, or hereabouts, Balder lost his way. When thinking hard, he was beside himself; he strode, and tossed his beard, and shouldered in-offensive people aside, and drew his brows together, or smiled. Then, by-and-by, he would

awake to realities and find himself he knew not where.

This time it was in an unsavoury back street; some dirty children were playing in the gutters, and a tall, rather flashily-dressed man was walking along some distance ahead, carrying something in one hand. Helwyse at first mended his pace to overtake the fellow, and ask the way to the hotel. But he presently changed his purpose, his attention being drawn to the oddity of the other's behaviour.

The man was evidently one of those who live much alone, and so contract unconscious habits, against which society offers the only safeguard. He was absorbed in some imaginary dialogue: and so imperfectly could his fleshly veil conceal his mental processes, that he gesticulated everything that passed through his mind. These gestures, though perfectly apparent to a steady observer, were so far kept within bounds as not to get more than momen-



tary notice from the passers-by, who, indeed, found metal more attractive to their gaze in Helwyse.

Now did the man draw his head back and spread out his arms, as in surprise or repudiation; now his shoulders rose high in deprecation or disclaimer. Now his forefinger cunningly sought the side of his nose; now his fist shook in an imaginary face. At times, he would stretch out a pleading arm and neck; the next moment he was an inflexible tyrant spurning a suppliant. Again, he would break into a soundless chuckle; then, raising his hand to his forehead, seemed overcome with despair and anguish. Occasionally he would walk some distance quite passively, only glancing furtively about him; but soon he would forget himself again, and the dialogue would begin anew.

Balder watched the man curiously, but without seeming to perceive the rather grisly similitude between the latter's vagaries and his own.

“What an ugly thing the inside of this person seems to be!” he said. “But then, whose thoughts and emotions would not render him a laughing-stock, could they be seen? If everyone looked to his fellow as he really is, or even as he seems to himself—mankind would fly asunder, and think the stars hiding-places not remote enough! How many men in the world could walk from one end of the street they live in to the other, talking and acting their inmost thoughts all the way,—and retain a bit of anybody’s respect or love afterwards? No wonder heaven is pure, if our spiritual bodies are only thoughts and feelings! and a hell where each devil beheld his fellow’s deformity outwardly manifested, would be hell indeed!

“But that cannot be! Angels may behold their own loveliness, because doing so makes them lovelier; but no devil could know his own vileness and live. They think their hideous-

ness charming, and when the darkness is thickest around them, they believe themselves most firmly to be in heaven. But the light of heaven would indeed be darkness to them, for a ray of it would strike them blind ! ”

Helwyse was over-fond of moralising, and shall not be quoted, save when to do so may seem to serve an ulterior purpose.

“ I would like to have the story that fellow is so exercised about,” muttered his pursuer. “ How do I know it doesn’t concern me ? That violin box is very much in his way : shall I offer to carry it for him, and in return, hear his story ? If the music soothes his soul as much as the box moderates his gestures —.”

Here the man abruptly turned into a doorway, and was gone. On coming up, Helwyse found that the doorway led in through a pair of green folding-doors to some place unseen. The house had an air of villainous respectability—a gambling-house air, or worse ! Hel-

wyse paused but for a moment, and then walked on : and thus, sagacious reader, the meeting was, for the second time, put off !

When he reached his hotel, he had only half-an-hour in which to dress for dinner ; but he prepared himself faultlessly, chanting a sort of hymn to appetite the while. “ Hunger,” quoth he, “ is mightiest of magicians : breeds hope, energy, brains : prompts to love and friendship. Hunger gives day and night their meaning, and causes the pulse of time to beat : creates society, industry, and rank. Hunger moves man to join in the work of creation—to harmonise himself with the music of the universe—to feel ambition, joy, and sorrow. Hunger unites man to nature in the ever-recurring inspiration to food, followed by the ever-alternating ecstasy of digestion. Morning tunes his heart to joy, for the benison of breakfast awaits him. The sun scales heaven to light him to his noonday meal ; evening wooes him supperwards, and

night brings timely sleep to waft him to another dawn ! Eating is earth's first law, and heaven itself could not subsist without it ! ”

So Balder Helwyse and the cook feasted gloriously that afternoon in the back pantry, and they solemnly installed the partridges among the constellations !

## VII.

### *A QUARREL.*

THAT same afternoon Mr MacGentle put his head into the outer office, and said,

“Mr Dyke, could I speak with you a moment?”

Mr Dyke scraped back his chair and went in, with his polished bald head and square face and figure—a block of common sense. He was more common-sensible than usual that afternoon, because he had so strangely forgotten himself in the morning. Mr MacGentle was in his usual position for talking with his confidential clerk—standing with his back to the fireplace and his coat-tails over his arms; experience had taught him that this attitude was better adapted than any other to sustain the crushing weight of Mr Dyke’s sense. To

have conversed with him in a sitting position would have been to lose breath and vitality before the end of five minutes.

“ Mr Helwyse has thoughts of settling in Boston to practice his profession,” began the President, gently. “ I told him you would be likely to know what the chances are.”

“ Profession is—what?” demanded Mr Dyke, settling his fist on his hip.

“ Oh — doctor — physician — eye-doctor, he said, I think.”

“ Eye-doctor? Well, there’s Dr. Schlemm won’t last the winter ; may drop any day. Just the thing for Mr Helwyse—Dr Helwyse.” And the subject being discussed at some length between the gentlemen, took on a promising aspect. His house was picked out for the new incumbent, his earnings calculated, his success foretold. Two characters so diverse as were the President and his clerk, united, it seems, in liking the young physician.

"Married?" asked Mr Dyke, after a pause.

"Why, no—no: and he doesn't seem inclined to marry. But he is quite young; perhaps he may later on in life, Mr Dyke."

The elderly clerk straightened his mouth. "Matter of taste, and policy! Gives solidity, position; and is an expense and a responsibility." Mr Dyke was himself well known to be the husband of an idolised wife and the father of a despotic family.

"He never had the advantage of woman's influence in his childhood, you know. His poor mother died in giving him and his sister birth; and his sister was lost, stolen away, two or three years later. He does not appreciate woman at her true value," murmured Mac-Gentle.

"Stolen away? His sister died in infancy, so *I* understood, sir," said the clerk, whose versions of past events were apt to differ from the President's.



But the President, perhaps because he was conscious that his memory was treacherous regarding things of recent occurrence, was abnormally sensitive as to the correctness of his more distant reminiscences.

“Oh no, she was stolen—stolen by her nurse just before Thor Helwyse went to Europe, I think,” said he.

“Beg your pardon, sir!” said Mr Dyke, with an iron smile. “Died; burnt to death in her first year; yes, sir!”

“Mr Dyke,” rejoined MacGentle dignifiedly, lifting his chin high above his stock, “I have myself seen the little girl, then in her third year, pulling her brother’s hair on the nursery floor. She was dark-eyed, a very lovely child. As to the burning, I now recollect that when the house in Brooklyn took fire, the child was in danger, but was rescued unharmed by the nurse, who herself received very severe injuries.”

Mr Dyke heaved a long deliberate sigh, and allowed his eyes to wander slowly round the room, before replying,

“You are not a family man, Mr MacGentle, sir. Don’t blame you, sir. Your memory, perhaps—but no matter.—The nurse who stole the child was, I presume, the same who rescued her from the fire?”

Mr Dyke had perhaps intended to give a delicately ironical emphasis to this question, but his irony was much like himself, a very unwieldy and unmistakable affair. The truth was, he was a little staggered by the President’s circumstantial statement, whence his deliberation, and his not entirely pertinent rejoinder about “a family man.”

“And why not the same, sir? I ask you, why not the same?” demanded Mr MacGentle, with slender imperiousness.

But by this time Mr Dyke had thought of a new argument.

“The little girl, I understood you to say, was dark? Since she was the twin-sister of one of Mr Balder Helwyse’s complexion, that is odd, Mr MacGentle, odd, sir.” And the solid family-man fixed his sharp brown eyes full upon the unsubstantial bachelor. The latter’s delicate nostrils expanded, and a pink flush rose to his faded cheeks. He was now as haughty and superb as a Paladin.

“I will discuss business subjects with my subordinates, Mr Dyke; not others, if you please. This dispute was not begun by me. Let it be carried no further, sir. Twins are not necessarily, nor invariably, of the same complexion. Let nothing more be said, Mr Dyke. I trust the little girl may yet be found and restored to her family—to—to her brother. I trust she may yet be found, sir!” and he glared at Mr Dyke aggressively.

“I trust you may live to see it, Mr MacGen-

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H

tle, sir!" retorted the confidential clerk, shifting his ground in a truly masterly manner; and before the President could recover, he had bowed and gone out. Ten minutes afterwards, MacGentle opened the door, and lo! Dyke himself on the threshold.

"Mr Dyke!"

"Mr MacGentle!" in the same breath.

"I—Mr Dyke, let me apologise for my asperity—for my rudeness," says MacGentle, holding out his thin white hand, his eyebrows more raised, the corners of his mouth more depressed than ever. "I am sincerely sorry that—that—"

"O sir!" exclaims the square clerk, grasping the thin hand in both his square palms. "O sir!—O sir!—no, no!—no, no! I was just coming to beg you—my fault, my fault, Mr MacGentle, sir!—no, no!"

Thus incoherently ended the quarrel between these old friends, the dispute being left unde-

cided. But the important point was established that, in case his uncle's fortune failed to enrich him, Balder was insured a practice in Boston.

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## VIII.

### *A COLLISION IMMINENT.*

A LARGE handsome steamer was the "Empire State," of the line which ran between Newport and New York. She was painted white, had walking-beam engines, and ornamented paddle-boxes, and had been known to run nearly twenty knots in an hour. On the evening of the 27th of May, in the year of which we write, she left her Newport dock as usual, with a full complement of passengers. On getting out of the harbour, she steamed into a bank of solid fog, and only got out of it next morning just before passing Hellgate, at the head of East River, New York. On the passage down Long Island Sound, she met with an accident. She ran into the schooner "Resurrection," which was lying becalmed across her course,

carrying away most of the schooner's bowsprit, but doing no serious damage. This, however, was not the worst. On arriving in New York, it was found that one of the passengers was missing! He had fallen overboard during the night,—possibly at the moment of the collision.

Balder Helwyse was on board. After dining with the cook, and smoking a real Havana cigar (probably the first real one he had ever been blessed withal), he put a package of the same brand in his haversack, bade his entertainer—who solemnly engaged to remain in Boston for Mr Helwyse's sole sake,—bade his fellow convivialist good-by, and took the train to Newport, and from there, "The Empire State" for New York.

The darkness was the most impenetrable the young man had ever seen; Long Island Sound was like a pocket! The passengers—those who did not go to their staterooms at once,—sat in the cabin reading, or dozing on

the chairs and sofas. A few men stayed out on deck for an hour or two, smoking ; but at length they too went in. The darkness was appalling. The officer on the bridge blew the steam-fog-whistle, every few moments, and kept his lanterns hung out : but they must have been invisible at sixty yards.

Helwyse kept the deck alone. Apparently he meant to smoke his whole bundle of cigars before turning in. Up and down he paced, Napoleon-like in his high boots, until finally he was brought to a stand by the blind night-wall, which no man can either scale or circumvent. Then he leaned on the railing and looked against the darkness. Not a light to be seen, in heaven or on earth ! The water below whispered and swirled past, torn to soft fragments by the gigantic paddle-wheel. Helwyse's beard was wet, and his hands sticky with the salt mist.

Ever and anon sounded the fog-whistle, hoarsely, as though the fog had got in its throat ;



and the pale glare of a lantern, fastened aloft somewhere, lit up the white issuing steam for a moment. There was no wind ; one was conscious of motion, but all sense of direction and position—save to the steersman—was lost. Helwyse could see the red end of the cigar, and very cosey and comfortable it looked ; but he could see nothing else.

It is said that staid and respectable people, when thoroughly steeped in night, will sometimes break out in wild grimaces and outlandish gesticulations ! It is certainly the time when unlawful thoughts and words come to men most readily and naturally. Night brings forth many things which daylight starts from. The real power of darkness lies not in merely baffling the eyesight, but in creating the feeling of darkness in the soul. The chains of light are broken, and we can almost believe our internal night to be as impenetrable to God's eye, as the external, to our own !—

By and by, Helwyse thought he would find some snug place and sit down. The cabin of the "Empire State" was built on the main deck, abaft the funnel, like a long low house. Between the stern end of this house and the taffrail, was a small space, thickly grown with camp-stools. Thither Helwyse groped his way, got hold of a couple of the camp-stools, and arranged himself comfortably with his back against the cabin wall. The waves bubbled invisibly in the wake beneath. After sitting for a while in the dense blackness, Helwyse began to feel as though his whole physical self was shrivelled into a single atom, careering blindly through infinite space!

After all, and really, was he anything more? If he chose to think not, what logic could convince him of the contrary? Visible creation, as any child could tell him, was an illusion—was not what it seemed to be. But this darkness was no illusion! why then was it not the only

reality? and he but an atom charged with a vital power of so-called senses, which generally deceived him, but sometimes—as now,—let him glimpse the truth? The fancy, absurd as it was, had its attraction for the time being. This great living, staring world of men and things is a terrible weight to lug upon one's back. But if man be an invisible atom—what a vast wild boundless freedom is his! Infinite space is wide enough to cut any caper in, and no one the wiser.

One would like to converse with a man who had been born and had lived in solitude and darkness. What original views he would have about himself and life! Would he think himself an abstract intelligence, out of space and time! What a riddle his physical sensations would be to him! Or, suppose him to meet with another being brought up in the same way:—how they would mystify each other! Would they learn to feel shame, love, hate? or do the

passions grow only in sunshine? Would they ever laugh? Would they hatch plots against each other, lie, deceive? Would they have secrets from each other?

But, fantasy aside, take a supposable case. Suppose two sinners of our daylight world to meet for the first time, mutually unknown, on a night like this. Invisible—only audible—how might they plunge profound into most naked intimacy—read aloud to each other their deepest heart-secrets! Would the confession lighten their souls, or make them twice as heavy as before?—Then, the next morning, they might meet and pass, unrecognising and unrecognised. But would the knot binding them to each other be any the less real, because neither knew to whom he was tied? Some day, in the midst of friends, in the brightest glare of the sunshine,—the tone of a voice would strike them pale and cold!—

Somewhat after this fashion, perhaps, did

Helwyse commune with himself. He liked to follow the whim of the moment whither it would lead him. He was romantic—it was one of his agreeablest traits, because spontaneous : and he indulged it the more as being confident that he had too much solid ballast in the hold to be in danger of upsetting. To-night, at this point of his mental ramble, he discovered that his cigar was gone out. Had he been thinking aloud ? He believed not—and yet there was no telling : he often did so, unconsciously. Were it so, and were any one listening,—that person had him decidedly at advantage !

What had put it into his head that some one might be listening ? It may have come by pure accident—if there be such a thing. The idea returned, stealing over his mind like a chilling breath. What if some one had all along been close at hand, with eyes fixed upon him !—Helwyse found himself sitting

perfectly still, holding his breath to listen. There was no disguising it—he felt uneasy. He wished his cigar had not gone out. On second thoughts, he wished there had been no cigar at all ; because if any one were near, the cigar must have pointed out the smoker's precise position. The uneasiness did not lessen, but grew more defined.

It was like the sensation felt when pointed at by a human finger, or persistently stared at. Was there, indeed, any one near ? No sound or movement gave answer, but the odd sensation continued. Helwyse fancied he could now tell whence it came,—it was from the left, and not far away. He peered earnestly thitherward, but his eyes only swallowed blackness.

Was not this carrying a whim to a foolish length ? If he thought he had a companion, why not speak and end the doubt ? But the dense silence, darkness, uncertainty, made common-sense seem out of place. The whole

black fog, the sea, the earth itself, seemed to be pressing down his will ! The longer he delayed the weaker he grew.

A slight shifting of his position caused him all at once to encounter the eyes of the unseen presence with his own ! The stout-nerved young fellow was startled to the very heart. Was the unseen presence startled also ? At all events, the shock found Balder Helwyse his tongue, seldom before tied up without his consent !

“ I hope I'm not disturbing your solitude ? You are not a noisy neighbour, sir ! ”

So flat fell the words on the blank darkness, it seemed as if there could never be a reply. Nevertheless, a reply came.

“ You must come much nearer me than you are, to disturb my solitude. It does not consist in being without a companion. ”

The quality of this voice of darkness was peculiar. It sounded old, yet of an age that

had not out-lived the devil of youth. Probably the invisibility of the speaker enhanced its effect. With most of the elements of pleasing it was nevertheless repulsive. It was soft, fluent, polished,—but savage licence was not far off, hard-held by a slender leash : an underlying suggestion of harsh discordance. The utterance, though somewhat rapid was carefully distinct.

Helwyse had the gift of familiarity—of that rare kind of familiarity which does not degenerate into contempt. But there was an incongruity about this person, hard to assimilate. In a couple of not very original sentences, he had wrought upon his listener an effect of depraved intellectual power, strangely combined with artless simplicity—an unspeakably distasteful conjunction ! Imagination, freed from the check of the senses, easily becomes grotesque ; and Helwyse, unable to see his companion, had no difficulty in picturing him as a grisly monster,



having a satanic head set upon the ingenuous shoulders of a child. And what was Helwyse himself? No longer surely the gravely humourous moraliser? the laws of harmony forbid! He likewise is a monster,—say (since grotesqueness is the fashion) the heart of Lucifer burning beneath the cool brain of a Grecian sage. The symbolism is not inapt, since Helwyse—while afflicted with pride and ambition as abstract as boundless—had a logical fearless brain, and keen delight in beauty.—

“I was just thinking,” remarked the latter monster, “that this was a good place for confidential conversation.”

“You believe then that talking relieves the mind!” rejoined the former, softly.

“I believe a thief or a murderer would be glad of an hour—such as now passes—to impart the story of what is dragging him to Hell.—And even the best houses are better for an airing!”

“A pregnant idea! There are certainly some topics one would like to discuss, free from the restraint which responsibility imposes.—Have you ever reflected on the subject of omnipotence?”

Somewhat confounded at this bold question, Helwyse hesitated a moment.

“I can’t see you, remember, any more than you can see me!” insinuated the voice demurely.

“I believe I have sometimes asked myself whether it were obtainable—how it might be approximated,” admitted Helwyse, cautiously; for he began to feel that even darkness might be too transparent for the utterance of some thoughts.

“But you never got a satisfactory answer, and are not therefore omnipotent? Well, the reason probably is that you began wrongly. Did it ever occur to you to try the method of sin?”

“ To obtain omnipotence ?—No ! ”

“ It would not be right, eh ? ” chuckled the voice. “ But then one must lay aside prejudice if one wants to be all-powerful ! Now, sin denotes separation : the very etymology of the word should have attracted the attention of an ambitious man, such as you seem to be. It is a path separate from all other paths, and therefore worth exploring.”

“ It leads to weakness, not to power ! ”

“ If followed in the wrong spirit—very true. But the wise man sins and is strong ! See how frank I am !—But don’t let me monopolise the conversation.”

“ I should like to hear your argument, if you have one. You are a prophet of new things.”

“ Sin is an old force, though it may be applied in new ways.—Well, you will admit that the true sinner is the only true reformer and philosopher among men ?—No ?—I will explain then. The world is full of discordances for

which man is not to blame. His endeavour to meet and harmonise this discordance is called sin. His indignation at disorder—rebellion against it—attempts to right it—are crimes ! That is the vulgar argument, which wise men smile at.”

“I may be very dull, but I think your explanations need explaining !”

“We will take some examples. What is the liar, but one who sees the false relations of things, and seeks to put them in the true? The mission of the thief, again, is to equalise the notoriously unjust distribution of wealth. A fundamental defect in the principles of human association gave birth to the murderer ; and as for the adulterer, he is an immortal protest against the absurd laws which interfere between the sexes.—Are not these men, and others of like stamp, the bulwarks of true society ?—our leaders towards justice and freedom ?”

Whether this were satire, madness, or earnest,

Helwyse could not determine. The night fog had got into his brain. He made shift, however, to say that the criminal class were not, as a mere matter of fact, the most powerful.

"Again you misapprehend me," rejoined the voice with perfect suavity. "No doubt there are many weak and foolish persons who commit crimes; nay, I will admit that the vast majority of criminals are weak and foolish. But that does not affect the dignity of the true sinner—he who sins from exalted motives. Ignorance is the only real crime—polluting deeds that, wisely done, are sublime. Sin is culture!"

"Were I, then, from motives of self-culture, to kill you, I should be taking a long step towards rising in your estimation?" put in Helwyse.

"Admirable!" softly exclaimed the voice, in a tone as of an approving pat on the back. "Certainly I should be the last to deny it!"

But would it not be more for the general good were I, who have long been a student of these arcana, to kill a seeming novice like you! It would assure me of having had one sincere disciple!"

"I wonder whether he's really mad?" mused Balder Helwyse, shuddering a little in the dampness.

"But badinage aside," resumed this loquacious voice, "although there is so much talk and dispute about evil, very few people know what evil essentially is. Now, there are some things the mere doing of which, by the most involuntary agent, would at once stamp his soul with the conviction of ineffable sin. He would have touched the essence of evil. And if a wise man has done that, he has had in his hand the key to omnipotence!"

"It is easily had, then! A man need but take his Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and run through the catalogue of crimes. He would be

sure of finding your key hidden beneath some of them."

"No; you do Moses scant justice! He—shrewd soul!—was too cunning to fall into such an error as that. He forbade a few insignificant and harmless acts which every one is liable to commit. His policy was no less sagacious than simple. By amusing mankind with such trumpery, he lured them off the scent of true sin. Believe me, the artifice was no idle one! Should mankind learn the secret, a generation would not pass before the world would be turned upside down, and its present Ruler be buried in the ruins!"

At this point surely Helwyse got up and went to his state-room, without listening to another word?—Not so! the Lucifer in him was getting the better of the sage. He wanted to hear all that the voice of darkness had to say. There might be something new, something instructive, in it. He might chance to

hear a word that would unbar the door he had striven so long to open. He aimed at knowledge and power beyond recognised human reach. He had taken thought with himself keenly and deeply, but was still uncertain and unsatisfied. Here opened a new avenue so untried as to transcend common criticism. The temptation to omnipotence is a grand thing, and may have shaken greater men than Helwyse; and he had trained himself to regard it—not exactly as a temptation! As for good or bad methods, at a certain intellectual height such distinctions vanish. Vulgar immorality he would turn from as from anything vulgar; but refined philosophic immorality as a weapon of power—there was fascination in it!

Folly and delusion! But Helwyse was only Helwyse, careering through pitchy darkness, on a viewless sea, with a plausible voice at his ear insinuating villainous thoughts with an air of devilish good-fellowship!—



The "Empire State" was at this moment four and a-half miles north-east of the schooner whose bowsprit she was destined to carry away. The steamer was making ten knots an hour; the schooner was slowly drifting with the tide into the line of the steamer's course. The catastrophe was, therefore, about twenty-seven minutes distant.

## IX.

### *THE VOICE OF DARKNESS.*

THE fog-whistle screeched dismally. Helwyse took his foot off the camp-stool in front of him, and sat upright.

“Do you know this secret of sin?” he asked.

“It must, of course, be an object of speculation to a thoughtful man,” answered the voice, modestly parrying the question. “But I assure you that only a man of intellect—of genius—has in him the intelligence, the sublime reach of soul, which could attain the full solution of the problem. They who merely blunder into it would fail to grasp the grand significance of the idea.”

“But you affirm that whoever fairly masters the problem of absolute sin, would have God and His kingdom at his mercy?”

"I am loth to appear boastful, but I do apprehend the fact to be not unlike what you suggest," returned the voice, with a subdued gusto. "It would depend upon our hypothetical person's discretion, and his views as to the claims of the august Being who has so long controlled the human race,—how much the existing order of things might have to fear from him. I should imagine that the august Being, if He be as wise as they say He is, would be careful how He treated the hypothetical person!"

"You are a liar!" said Helwyse unceremoniously. "Why is not Satan, who must possess this all-powerful secret, supreme over the universe?"

Instead of taking offence (as Helwyse, to do him justice, had hoped ; for his Berserker blood, which boiled only at heaven-and-hell temperature, was beginning to stir in him)—so far from being offended, the voice only uttered its peculiar quiet chuckle.

“Your frankness charms me!—it proves you worthy to learn.—Satan—supposing there is such a personage—divides with the august Being the sovereignty of the spiritual world. Were I a cynic, I should say he owned, at least, one-half the physical world into the bargain! But Satan is only a spirit, and his power over men but as the power of a dream. Were a Satan to arise in the flesh, so that mankind could see and touch him, and hear his voice with their fleshly ears——there were a Satan! Already has the Incarnation of goodness appeared to men, and though the world is moved to virtue slowly only and reluctantly, mark how mighty has been his influence! What think you, then, would be the power of a Christ of Evil, opening to men the path they already grope for? — I tell you the human race would be his only! Hell, full to bursting with their hurrying souls, would outweigh heaven in the balance! The teller

of the secret would be king above all—for ever!”

The sinuous voice had twined round the listener's mind, swaddling the vigorous limbs into imbecile inertia. When before now did a sane human brain suffer itself to be duped by sophistry? This case were worth marking if only because it is unparalleled.

“And the only punishable sin is ignorance,” muttered Helwyse. “Well, I have thought so, too; and questioned whether a man might have power over himself to put his hand to evil and to good alike, remaining impartial and impassive; and so make good and evil alike minister to his culture and raise him upwards!”

“The question does credit to your wit,” chimed in the voice of darkness. “Whoever has in him the making of a deity, must learn the nature of opposites. The soldier will not join battle without studying the tactics of his enemy. Without experimental knowledge of

both evil and good, none save a fool would believe that a man may become all powerful."

"From the care with which you avoid speaking the name of God,—if from no other cause,—I should take you to be the Devil himself!" observed Helwyse bluntly.

"Well, profanity is vulgar! As to my being the Devil, it is too dark here for either denial or acknowledgment to be of practical use. But (to be serious) about this secret—"

The voice paused interrogatively. Lucifer, speaking through Helwyse's lips, demanded sullenly,

"Well,—what is the secret?"—

What, indeed!—Why, there is no such secret: it is a bugbear! But the moral perversion of the person who could soberly put the question that Helwyse asked is not so easily disposed of. It met, indeed, with full recognition. As for the subtle voice, having accomplished its main purpose, it now began to evade the point and

run into digressions ; until the collision came and ended the conversation for ever.

“ Unfortunately,” said the voice, “ the secret is not such as can be told in a word. Like all profound knowledge, it can be communicated only by leading the learner step by step over the ground traversed by the original discoverer. Let me, as a sort of preliminary, suppose a case.”

Hereupon ensued a considerable silence, and Helwyse seemed to himself once more a detached atom flying without guide or control through infinite darkness. Where was he?—what was he? Did the world exist,—the broad earth, the sunny sky, the beauty, the sound, the order and sweet succession of nature? Was he but a shadow that had dreamed a strange dream for a moment, and would anon be quenched, and know what had seemed Self no more?—Strangely, through the doubt and uncertainty, Helwyse felt the pressure of his shoulders

against the cabin wall, and the touch of the dead cigar between his fingers!

The voice, resuming, restored him to a reality that seemed less trustworthy than the doubt. The tone was not quite the same as heretofore. The smooth mocking had given place to a hurried excitement, alien to the philosophic temperament.

“A man kidnaps the child of his enemy, through the child to revenge himself.—Kill it?—no! he is no short-sighted bungler: he has refinement, foresight, understanding. She is but an infant—open and impressible, warm and sanguine! He isolates her from sight and reach. He pries into her nature with keenest delicacy—no leaf is unread. Being learnt—he works upon it; touches each budding trait with gentlest impulse. No violence! he seems to leave her to her own development; yet nothing goes against his will. More than half is left to nature, but his scarce perceptible touches



bias nature. Ah! the idealisation of education."

"This sounds more real than hypothetical!" thought Helwyse.

"So cunning was he, he reversed in her mind the universal law. Evil was good—good, evil. She grew fast and strong, for evil is the sweeter food—it is rich earth to the plant. She never knew that evil existed, yet evil was all she knew! For, whatever is forced, reacts: he never taught her positive sin, lest she perversely turn to good."

"Did he mean insensibly to initiate her into the knowledge of absolute sin?"

"Such would be his purpose—such would be his purpose! To make her a devil, without the chance of knowing it possible to be anything else!"

"He was a fool!" growled Helwyse. "The plan is folly—impracticable in twenty ways, A soul cannot be so influenced. Devils are not

made by education. The only devil would be the educator!"

But the voice had forgotten his presence. It ceased not to mutter to itself while he was speaking, and now it broke forth again.

"Years have passed—she is a woman now. She knows not that the world exists. All is yet latent within her. But the time is at hand when the latent forces shall flower! Plunged into life with nothing to hold by—no truth, no divine help: her marvellous powers and passions in full strength—all trained to drag her down—not one aspiring: maddened by new thoughts—limitless opportunities opening before her, she will plunge into such an abyss of sin as has been undreamt of since the Deluge!"

"Well? what of it? what is the upshot?" questioned Helwyse, with sullen impatience. The emotion now apparent in the voice, uncanny though it was, counteracted the spell wrought by its purely intellectual depravity.

Helwyse was perhaps beginning to understand that he had ventured his stock of virgin gold for a handful of unclean waste-paper!

“He will come back—her father—my enemy! I have waited for him from youth to age. I have seen him in my dreams, and in visions. I am with him continually—we talk together. First, cringingly and softly, I lead him to recall the past,—to speak of his dead wife,—of his lost child—her baby ways and words. I lure him on until imagination has fired his love, and given life and vividness to his memory. Then I whisper—She is alive! she is near! in a moment he shall behold her! And while his heart beats and he trembles, I bring her forth in her beauty.—Take her! your daughter! the only devil on earth: but devils shall spring like grass in the track of her footsteps!”—

The voice had worked itself into a frenzy, and forgetting secrecy, had crazily exposed

itself. Its owner was probably some poor lunatic, subject to fits of madness. But Helwyse was full of scorn and anger, born of that bitterest disappointment that admits not even the poor comfort of having worthily aspired. He had been duped—and by the cobwebs of a madman's brain! He broke into a short laugh, harsh to the ear, and answering to no mirthful impulse.

“So! you are the hero of your story? You have brooded all your life over a crazy scheme of stabbing a father through his child, until you have become as blind as you are vicious! As for the girl, you may have made her ignorant and stupid, or even idiotic: but that she should be Queen of Hell, or anything of that kind—.”

He stopped, for his unseen companion was evidently beyond hearing him. The man seemed to be actually struggling in a fit—gasping and choking. It was a piteous business—

not less piteous than revolting. But Helwyse felt no pity—only ugly, hateful, unrelenting anger, needing not much stirring to blaze forth in fearful passion. Where now were his wise saws—his philosophic indifference? Self-respect is the pith of such supports, which being gone, the supports fail.

“My music—my music!” gasped the voice; “my music or I shall die!”

“Die? Yes, it were well you should die. You cumber the earth!—Shall I do it?” Helwyse muttered to his heart: “merely as a means of culture!”

Perhaps it was said only in a mood of sardonic jesting. The next moment, no doubt, Balder Helwyse would have retired to his cabin, leaving the voice of darkness forever. But at that moment, the hurried flash of a lantern on the captain’s bridge fell full on the young man’s face and shoulders, gleaming in his eyes and lighting up the masses of yellow hair and

mighty beard. He was standing with one hand resting upon the taffrail. The dim halo of the fog, folding him about, made him look like a spirit.

## X.

### *HELWYSE RESISTS THE DEVIL.*

As the light so fell, hoarse voices shouted, and then a concussion shivered through the steamer, and her headway was stopped. But of this, Helwyse knew nothing : for the voice of darkness had burst forth in a cry of fear, amazement and hate ; and in another breath, he found himself clutched tightly in long wiry arms, and felt panting breath hot against his face.

He struggled at first to free himself, but he was held in the grip of a madman ! Then did the turbid current of his blood begin to leap and tingle, and strange half-thoughts darted through his mind like deformed spectres, capering as they flew ! The bulwark of his will was overthrown ; he could not poise himself long

enough to recover his self-sway. He was sliding headlong down a steep, with velocity momentarily increasing.—

Was it Balder Helwyse that was struggling thus furiously, his body full of fire, his brain of madness, his heart quick-beating with savage, wicked, thirsty joy? His soul,—his own no longer—was bestridden by a frantic demon who, brimming over with hot glee, drove him whirling blindly on, with an ever-growing purpose which surcharged each smallest artery, and furnished a condensed dart of malice wherewith to stab and stab again the opposing soul. He waxed every instant madder, wickedder, more devilishly exultant; and now, although panting, breathless, pricking at every pore with the agony of the strain,—he could scarce forbear screaming with delight! for he felt he was gaining, and—oh ecstasy! knew that his adversary felt it also, and that his heart was as full of black despair and terror, as was



his conqueror's of intolerable triumph.—Gaining still !—

Strange, that all through this wild frenzy in which body and soul were rapt, the essential Balder Helwyse seemed to be looking on, with a curious repellant twist of the features, commenting on what was going forward, and noting, with quiet interest and accuracy, every varying phase of the struggle;—noting as of significance that the sway of the demon of murder made the idea of other crimes seem beyond words congenial, enticing, delicious.

Steadily, through the storm of lawless fury, the pre-destined victory has been drawing near ! The throbbing of his enemy's heart—Helwyse feels it : did ever lover so rejoice in the palpitations of his mistress ? O the wine of life ! drunk from the cup of murder !—Hear how the wretch's voice breaks choking from his throat ! he would beg for mercy, but cannot—shall not ! Keep your fingers in his throat ; the other

hand creeps warily downwards.—Now, hurl him up—over!——

—But with what an ugly gulp the black water swallowed his body!—

## XI.

### *A DEAD WEIGHT.*

WAS it not well done? Tempted to covet imaginary wickedness, Helwyse was ripe for real crime,—and who so worthy to suffer as the tempter?

He leaned panting against the taffrail. His predominant feeling was that he had been ensnared. His judgment had been drugged—he had been lured on to evil. An infamous conspiracy!

His breath regained, he stood upright, and in a mechanical manner began to arrange his disordered dress. His haversack was gone,—had been torn from his shoulders, and carried overboard. An awkward loss! for it contained, among other things, certain valuable letters and papers given him by his father; not to speak of

a note-book of his own, and uncle Glyphic's miniature. His dead enemy had carried off the proofs of his murderer's identity!

Not till now did Helwyse become aware of an unusual tumult on the steamer. Had they seen the deed? He stood with set teeth, one hand on the taffrail. Rather than be taken alive, he would leap over! But it soon became evident that the nucleus of excitement was elsewhere. The "Empire State" was at a standstill. Captain and mates were shouting to one another and at the sailors. By the flying light of lanterns, Helwyse caught glimpses of the sails and tall masts of a schooner. He began to comprehend what had happened.

"Thank God! that saves me," he said with a sense of relaxation. Then he turned and peered fearfully into the black abyss beyond the stern.—Nothing there! nothing save the heavy breathing of remorseless waves.

The statistics of things God has been thanked

for,—what piquant instances would such a collection afford ! Any unusual stir of emotion seems to impel a reference to something higher than the world. Only a bloodless calm appears secure from God's interference. It is worthy of remark, that this was the first time in Helwyse's life (at least since his arrival at years of discretion) that he had thanked God for anything. It was owing—not to his being of a specially ungrateful disposition, but, to his peculiar ideas upon the subject of a Supreme Being. God, he believed, was no more than the highest phase of man ; and he saw in any man of sufficient natural endowment, a possible God : just as every American citizen is a possible President ! What is of moment at present, however, is the fact, that Helwyse's first inconsistency of word with creed, dates at the time he forsook his self-control on board the midnight steamer.

In that prayer of thanksgiving, his passion

passed away. After unnaturally distending every sense and faculty, it had suddenly ebbed, leaving the irritating consciousness of a painful vacuum. Something must be done to fill it. One drawback to crime seems to be, that it is not sufficient unto itself. It creates a craving that needs to be fed. The demon returns and demands a fresh task ; and he returns again for ever !

Helwyse, therefore, plunged into the midst of the uproar consequent upon the collision, and tried to absorb something of the common feeling of excitement, to identify himself with other men—no longer to be apart from them and above them. But he did not succeed. It seemed as though he never would feel excitement or warmth in the blood again ! His deed was a dead-weight that steadied him in spite of his best efforts. His aim had hitherto been not to forget himself : let him forget himself now if he can !

The uproar was over all too soon, and the steamer was once more under-way.

“No serious harm done, Sir!—no harm done!” observed a spruce steward to Helwyse.

“No—no harm!”

“By the way, Sir, thought I heard some one sing out aft just afore we struck. You hear it, Sir? Thought some fellow’d gone overboard, may be!”

“I saw no one,” replied Helwyse; nor had he. But he turned away fearing that the brisk steward might read prevarication in his face. No, he had seen no one: but he had heard a plunge! The memory of it revolted him, yet he could not banish it. Had there been a soul in the body before it made that dive?—even for a few moments afterwards? He would have given much to know! In theorising about crime, he had maintained that the motive was all. Now, though he could not controvert his

logic, he felt that it did not tell the whole truth. He recognised a divine conservative virtue in straws, and clutched at the smallest ! Through the long torture of self-questioning and indecision let us not follow him. Uncertainty is a ghastly element in such a matter.

He groped his way back to the taffrail,—why, he knew not ; but there he was at last ! He might soliloquise now,—there was no listener. He might light a cigar and smoke,—no one would see him. But on second thoughts—his cigars had gone overboard with the haversack !

He bent over the slender iron railing. Where was—it, now ?—Miles away by this time, swinging, swaying, down,—down,—down to the bottom of the Sound ! Slowly turning over as it sinks, its arms now thrown out, now doubled underneath ; the legs sprawling helplessly ; the head loosely wagging on the dead neck. Down,—down : now pitching slowly



head forwards; now snatched sideways by a sudden current; now righting and going down standing, the hair floating straight up on end. Down!—O would it never have done sinking,—sinking,—sinking? Was the sea as deep as Hell?

But when it reached the bottom, would it rest there? Ah, no—not even then! It would drift about uneasily on the dark sand for a while, the green gloom of the water above it. Every hour it would grow less and less heavy: by and by it would begin slowly to rise—rise! How horrible it looked now—not like itself, that had been horrible enough before. Rising, rising. O fearful thing! why come to tell dead-men's tales here? You have done with the world. What wants mankind with you? Be-gone! sink, and rise no more!—It will not sink: still it rises, and the gloom lightens as it slowly buoys upward; the green light shrinkingly rests upon it—reveals the dreadful features.

The limbs are pliant no longer, but stiff—terribly stiff and unyielding. Still it rises—nearer, and nearer to the surface. See where the throat has been gripped!—Up it comes at last, in the morning sun, amidst the sparkling, laughing, pure blue waves—the swollen, dead thing! dead in the midst of the world's life: hideous in the midst of the world's beauty. It bobs and floats and will sink no more—would rise to heaven if it could! No need for that! the tide takes it, and creeps stealthily with it towards the shore, and casts it with shudder and recoil upon the beach. There it lies.—

Such visions haunted Helwyse as he leant over the taffrail. He had not suspected, when he started, upon how long a voyage he was bound. How many hours was it since he and the cook had dined so merrily together? Was such a contrast possible? Surely no more hideous delusion than this of time, ever imposed upon mankind. For months and years he jogs

on with us, a dull and sober-paced pedestrian. Then comes a sudden eternity! But time thrusts a clock in our faces, and shows us that the hands have marked a minute only. Shall we believe him?

Helwyse suffered from a vivid imagination. He went not to his room that night. He kept the deck and tried to talk with the men, following them about and asking aimless questions, until they began to give him short answers. Where were his pride and serene superiority to the friendship or enmity of his race? his philosophic self-criticism and fanciful badinage? his resolute conquering eyes? his bearing of graceful careless authority? Had he packed all these attributes in his travelling-bag, and cast them with it upon the waters? and would they, no more than he, to whose care they were entrusted, ever come back?

With every new hour morning seemed further off. Helwyse, in his objectless wanderings,

came at last to the well of the engine-room, and hung over it, gazing at the bright swift sliding machinery, studying all the parts, tracing the subtle transmission of force from piece to piece. Here was companionship for him. It was a beautiful combination—so polished, effective, logical: like the minds of some philosophers moving with super-human power and regularity—but lifeless!

Helwyse watched it long, but its monotony finally wearied him. It was doing admirable work, but it never swerved from its course at the call of sentiment or emotion. Its travesty of life was repulsive. Machinery is the most excellent invention of man, but is modelled after no heavenly prototype, and will have no part in the millennium. It seems to annul space and time, yet gives no taste of eternity. Man lives more quickly by it, but not more. With another kind of weapon must the true victory over matter be achieved!

## XII.

### *MORE VAGARIES.*

Most benign and beautiful was the morning. The "Empire State" emerged from the fog, and left it, a rosy cloud, astern. The chasing waves sparkled and danced for joy. The sun was up, fresh and unstained as yesterday. Night, that had changed so much, had not dimmed him. With the same power and brightness as for innumerable past centuries his glorious glance coloured the grey sky blue. Helwyse, (he was at the stern taffrail again,) looked at the marvellous sphere with unwinking eyes, till it blurred and swam before him and danced in coloured rings. It warmed his face, but penetrated no deeper. Looking away, black suns moved before his eyes everywhere,

and the earth looked dim and shabby, as though blighted by a curse.

Helwyse had not slept, partly from disinclination to the solitude of his berth, partly because the thought of awakening dismayed him. Nevertheless, he could scarcely believe in what had happened now. He stood on the very spot; here was the semi-circle of railing, the camp-stools, the white cabin-wall against which he had leaned. But the blackness of night had so utterly passed away, that it seemed as if the deed done in it must in some manner have vanished likewise. What is fact at one time looks unreal at another. It must be associated with all times and moods before it can be fully comprehended and accepted.

Glancing down at the deck, Helwyse saw there the cigar he had been smoking the night before, flattened out by the tread of a foot; and lying close beside it, a sparkling ring. He picked it up; it was a diamond of purest

water, curiously caught between the mouths of two little serpents, whose golden and black bodies, twisted round each other, formed the hoop. Realising after a moment from whose finger it must have fallen, he had an impulse to fling it far into the sea; but his second thought was not to part from it. True, the idea of its former owner must always be hateful to his murderer; but the bond between their souls was closer than that between man and wife, and more indissoluble: and of such an unnatural union this ring was a fair emblem. Unnatural though the union were, it seemed to Helwyse at the time better than total solitude.

He felt heavy and inelastic, averse to himself, but still more to society. He wished to see men and women, yet not to be seen of them. He had used to be ready in speech and willing to listen; now, no subject interested him save one, on which his lips must be forever closed. When the sun had made himself thoroughly at

home on earth and in heaven, Helwyse went to his state-room, feeling unclean from the soul out. While making his toilet, he took care to leave the window-blind up, that he might at any moment see the blue sky and water, and the bright shore with its foliage and occasional houses. He shrank from severing even for an instant his communication with the beneficent spirit of nature. Yet, nature could not comfort him; in his extremest need he found her most barren. He had been wont to rejoice in her as the creature of his own senses, but when he asked her to sympathise with his pain, she laughed at him—the magnificent coquette! and bade him (since she was only his reflection) be content with his own sympathy. Truly, if man and nature be thus allied, and God be but developed man, then is self-sufficiency the sole virtue worth cultivating, and idolatry must begin at home!

His efforts to improve his appearance were



not satisfactory ; the loss of his toilet articles embarrassed him not a little, and he, moreover, lacked zest to enter into the business with his customary care. And what he did was done—not merely for his own satisfaction as heretofore—but with an eye to the criticisms of other people. His naive unconscious independence had got a blow. Having done his best he went out, pale and heavy-eyed, the diamond ring on his finger.

The passengers had begun to assemble in the cabin. It seemed to Helwyse, as he entered, that one and all stared at him with suspicious curiosity. He half expected to behold an accuser rise up and point a dreadful finger at him. But, in truth, the sensation he created was nothing more than common ; it was his morbid sensitiveness that for the first time took note of it. He had been accustomed to look at himself as at a third person, in whose faults and successes he was alike interested ; but, although

his present mental attitude might have moved him to smile, he actually felt no such impulse. The hue of his deed had permeated all possible forms of himself, thus barring him from any standpoint whence to see its humorous aspect. The sun would not shine on it!

As time passed on and no one offered to denounce him, he began to be a little at ease. Seeing the steward, with whom he had spoken the night before, he asked him whereabouts he supposed the "Resurrection" was?

"Oh! she'll be in by night, sir, safe enough! Wind's freshened up a good bit since.—Beg pardon, sir, did you happen to know the party next door to you?"

"I know no one. What about him?"

"Can't find him nowhere, sir! Door locked this morning—hadn't used his bed. Must have come aboard, for there was a violin lying on the bed, in a black box, for all the world like a little coffin, sir. Queer, ain't it?"

The steward was called away, but Helwyse's uneasiness had returned. Did this fellow suspect nothing? The student of men could not read his face; the power of insight seemed to have forsaken him. Reason could tell him that it was impossible he should be suspected, but reason no longer satisfied him.

He left the cabin, and once more sought the deck, harried and anxious. Why could he not be stolid and indifferent, as were many worse criminals than he? Or was his disquiet the gauge of his moral accountability? By as much as he was more finely gifted than other men, was the stain of sin upon his soul more ineffaceable than upon theirs? Last night, ignorance was the only evil! but had he been satisfied with less wisdom, might he not have sinned with more impunity?—Nevertheless, Balder Helwyse would hardly have been willing to purchase greater ease at the price of being less a man.

The steamer descended the narrow and swift current of East River, rounded Castle Garden, and reached her pier before eight o'clock. Shoulder to shoulder with the other passengers Helwyse descended the gang-plank. He reached the street unmolested, and beginning to realise that the notice he attracted was less on account of any visible brand of Cain upon him, than because his beard and hair were at variance with the fashion of the day. It occurred to him, moreover, that his unique appearance was now unsafe as well as irksome. Were—something found, in connection with evidence more or less circumstantial, how readily could he be pointed out!—how many and easily described were his peculiarities! His carelessness of public remark had been folly! The sooner his eccentricities were reduced, the better!

At the corner of the street stood a couple of policemen—ponderous, powerful fellows, able

between them to carry to gaol the most refractory criminal. One path was open to Helwyse whereby to recover his self-respect, and to regain his true footing with the world; and that led into the hands of those policemen! With a revulsion of feeling which was perhaps less strange than it appears, he walked up to them, resolved to surrender on a charge of murder. How simple an issue to all his embarrassments!

“Policemen!” he began, with a return of his assured voice and hearing. They stared at him, and one said, “How?”

“Direct me to the best hotel near here!” said Helwyse; and they stared, and told him the way to the Astor House.

There had been but the slightest hesitation in Helwyse’s mind, but during that pause he had reconsidered his resolve, and said no to it. Remembering some episodes of his past history, he cannot hastily be accused of vulgar fear of

death. In his case, indeed, it may have required more courage to close his mouth than to open it. Be that as it might, the question as to the degree and nature of his guilt was still undecided in his own mind. Moreover, had he been clear upon this point, he yet distrusted the competence of human laws to do him justice. He shrank from surrender less as affecting his person than as superseding his judgment. Failing himself and mankind, however, to what other court can he appeal? Should the fitting tribunal present itself, will he have the nerve to face it?

He did not go to the Astor House, notwithstanding the trouble he had taken to ask his way thither. He coasted along the more obscure thoroughfares, seeming to find something congenial in them. Here were people, many of whom had also committed crimes—who were his brethren—whose eyes he need not shun to meet. To be sure, they gave him

no friendly glances, taking him for some dainty aristocrat who, from idle curiosity, had sauntered into their domains. But Helwyse knew the secret of his kinship; and perhaps he indulged a momentary wild dream of proclaiming himself to them, entering into their life, and vanishing from that world which had known him heretofore. It is a shorter step than is generally supposed, from human height to human degradation.

A pale girl, with handsome features, careless expression, and somewhat disordered hair, leant out of a low window, her loose dress falling partly open from her bosom as she did so.

"Where are you going, my love?" inquired she, with a professionally attractive smile. "Aren't you going to give me a lock of that sweet yellow hair?—there's a duck!"

It so happened that Helwyse had never before been openly accosted by a member of this class of the community. Was this infringe-

ment of the rule the result of his own fall, or of her exceptional effrontery? He had an indignant glance ready poised,—but forbore to hurl it! The worst crime of the young woman was, that she disposed of herself at a rate of remuneration exactly equivalent to the value of the commodity; whereas he, less economical and orderly, had mortgaged his own soul by disposing of some one else's body, and was, if anything, out of pocket by the transaction! Undoubtedly the young woman had the best of it: very likely, had she been aware of the circumstances, she would not have deigned him so much as a smile. He therefore neither yielded to her solicitations nor rebuked them, but passed on. The adventure rectified his fraternising impulse. Albeit standing accountant for so great a sin, the mire was as yet alien to him.

But there was pertinence in the young woman's question—where was he going, indeed? Since the catastrophe on board the steamer, he



had forgotten Doctor Glyphic. He felt small inclination to meet him now; but certain considerations of personal interest wore another colour than yesterday. Robbed of his self-respect, he could ill afford to surrender worldly wealth into the bargain. On the other hand, to palm himself off upon his uncle for a true man, was adding hypocrisy to his other crime.

Such an objection, however, would hardly have turned the scale. Great crimes are magnets of smaller ones. It was necessary for Helwyse to alter the entire scheme of his life-voyage; and since he had failed in beating up against the wind, why not make all sail before it? Meanwhile it was easier to call on uncle Hiero than to devise any new course of action; and thus (had matters been left to their natural turn) mere inertia might have brought about their meeting.

But the irony of events turns our sternest resolves to ridicule. On the corner of the next

street was a hairdresser's shop, with its genial little proprietor, plump and smug, rubbing his hands and smiling in the doorway. Beholding the commanding figure of the yellow-bearded young aristocrat afar off, his professional mouth may well have watered over him. What a harvest for shears and razor was here! Dare he hope that to him would be entrusted the glorious task of reaping it?

As Helwyse gained the corner, his weary eyes took in the smiling hairdresser, the little room beyond, cheerful with sunshine and coloured paper-hangings, and the padded chair for customers. Here might he go in and rest awhile, and rise up a new man—a stranger to himself and to all who knew him. It was fitting that the inward change should take effect without—not to mention that the wearing of so conspicuous a mane was as unsafe as it was unsuitable.

He entered the shop therefore—the pro-

prietor backing and bowing before him—and sat down in the padded chair with a sigh. Immediately, he was enveloped in a light linen robe, a towel was tucked in round his neck by deft caressing fingers, the soothing murmur of a voice was in his ear, and presently sounded the click-click of shears. The descendant of vikings closed his eyes and felt rather comfortable.

The peculiar colour and luxuriance of Balder's hair were a marked attribute of the Helwyse line. In these days of ponderous genealogies, who would be surprised to learn that the family sprang from that Balder, surnamed the Beautiful, who was the sun-god of Scandinavian mythology? Certain distinctive characteristics of his, physical as well as mental, would appear to have been perpetuated with marvellous faithfulness throughout the descent: above all, golden locks, blue eyes, and a sunny disposition.

For the rest, so far as sober history can trace them back, they seem to have been a noble and adventurous race of men, loving the sea, but often taking a high part in the political affairs of the nation. The sons were uniformly fair, the daughters dark—owing, it was said, to the first mother of the line having been a dark-eyed woman. But the advent of a dark-eyed heir had been foretold from the earliest times, not without ominous—albeit obscure—hints as to the part he would play in the family history. The precise wording of no one of these old prophecies has come down to us; but they appear in general to have intimated that the dark-eyed Helwyse would bring the race to a ruinous and disgraceful end, saving on the fulfilment of certain conditions too improbable to deserve recording. The dead must return to life, the living must forsake their identity, love must unite the blood of the victim to that of the destroyer,—and other yet stranger things

must happen, before the danger could be averted.

The superstitious reverence paid to enigmatical utterances of this kind has long passed away, and if any meaning ever attaches to them, it is apt to be sadly common-place. Nevertheless, when Balder was born, and the hereditary blue eyes were found wanting, the circumstance was doubtless the occasion of much half-serious banter among those to whom the ominous prophecies were familiar. Certainly the young man had already made one grave mistake; and he could hardly have followed it up by a more disgraceful retreat than this to the hairdresser's saloon. The shades of his heroic forefathers in Valhalla would disown his shorn head with indignant scorn; for their golden locks had ever been sacred to them as their honour. When the Roman Empire was invaded by the Goths and Vandals, a Helwyse—so runs the tale—was taken

prisoner and brought before the Roman General. The latter summoned a barber and a headsman, and informed the captive that he might choose between forfeiting his head, and that which grew upon it. As to the precise words in which the northern warrior couched his reply, historians vary ; but they are agreed upon the important point that his head was chopped off without delay !

Did the memory of these things bring no blush to Balder's cheeks ? There he sat, as indifferent, to all outward seeming, as though he were asleep. This, however, may have been the apathy consequent upon the abandonment of lofty pretensions and sublime ambitions, betraying a proud sensitiveness rather than any lack of feeling. Balder Helwyse was not the first man of parts to appear in an undignified and unheroic light. The foremost man of all this world whined, like a sick girl, for his physic, and preposterously over-estimated his

swimming powers : yet his greatness found him out !

In sober earnest, however—what real importance attaches to Helwyse's doings at this juncture ? Physically and mentally weary, he may have acted from the most ordinary motives. As to his having entertained any superstitious crotchets about losing his hair—the spirit of the age forbid !

### XIII.

#### *THROUGH A GLASS.*

THE hairdresser possessed the quality (now rare among his class) of unlimited and self-enjoying loquacity ;—soothing, because its little waves lapsed in objectless prattle upon the shore of the apprehension, to be attended to or not at pleasure. The sentences were without regular head or tail, and were connected rather by a friendly arrangement among themselves than by any logical sequence ; while the ever-recurring pauses at interesting moments of work, wrought a recognition of how caressing had been the easy voice, and accumulated a lazy disposition to hear it continue.

Having decked Helwyse for the sacrifice, the little man had murmured confidentially in his ear,



“ Hair, sir ?—or beard, sir ?—or both ?—little off both, sir ? Just so. Hair first, please, sir. Love—ly morning ! ”

And thereupon the artist had begun to clip, and coo, and whisk softly about in the highest state of barbaric joy. As he worked, inspired by the curly, flowing, glossy locks which, to his eye, called inarticulately for the tools of his trade, his undulating monologue welled forth until Coleridge might have envied him. Helwyse listened to the sound, but let the words go by to that unknown limbo whither all sounds, good or bad, have been flying since time began.

By and by, the hair was done ; there ensued a plying of brushes, a blowing down the neck, and a shaking out of the linen apron.

“ Will you cast your eyes on the mirror now, sir, please ? ”

“ No ! go on and finish first,” replied Helwyse ; and forthwith a cushion was insinuated beneath his head, and his feet were elevated

upon a rest. He heard the preparation of the warm lather, and anon the knowing strapping of a razor. He put up his hand and stroked his beard for the last time, wondering how he would look without it.

“Never saw the like before, sir! must have annoyed you dreadful!” remarked the commiserating barber, as he passed the preparatory scissors round his customer’s jaw, mowing the great golden sheaf at one sweep. He spoke of it as of a cancer or some such painful excrescence, the removal of which must be to the sufferer a boon unspeakable!

Helwyse’s face expressed neither anguish nor relief; he presently lost himself in thoughts of his own, only returning to the perception of outward things on being asked by the barber whether he, also, had ever attended Camp-meetings? the subject evidently being one which had been held forth upon for some time past.

“No?” continued the little man, who, by long practice, had acquired a wonderful knack of interpreting silences: “Well, it’s a great thing, sir! and a right curious thing experiencing religion is, too! A great blessing I’ve found it, sir; there’s a peace dwells with me, as the minister says, right along all the time now. Does the razor please you, sir? Ah! I was a wild and godless being once, though always considered smart with the razor; Satan never took my cunning hand, as the Poet says, away from me. Yes, there was a time, sir, when I was how-d’y’-do with all the bloods around the place, and a good business I used to do out of them too, sir; but religion’s a peace there’s no understanding, as the good Book says, and if I don’t make all I used to, I save twice as much, and that’s the good of it, sir! Beau-ti-ful chin is yours, sir, I declare!”

“Do you believe in the orthodox faith?”

asked Helwyse: "in miracles, and the Trinity, and so forth?"

"Everything we're told to believe in I believe, I hope, sir; and as quick as I hear anything more, why, I'm ready to believe that also, provided only it comes through orthodox channels, as the saying is. Ah, sir, it's the unquestioning belief that brings the happiness: I wouldn't have anything explained to me—not if I could! and my faith is such that what goes against it I never would believe, not if you proved it to me in black and white, sir. Lovely skin yours, sir,—just like a woman's! The intellect is a snare, that's what it is.—Ah, yes! You think with me, sir, don't you?"

But Helwyse had relapsed into silence. The little hair-dresser was happy, was he? happy and hopeful, and confident of spiritual progress? had no misgivings and feared no danger,—because he had eliminated reason from his scheme of religion! Divine reason—could man live

without it ! A snare ?—Well, had not Balder found it so ?

True, that was not reason's fault, but his that misused reason. True, also that he who believed on other's authority, believed not ideas but men, and was destitute of self-reliance and dignity. Yet the hair-dresser seemed to find in that very dependence his best happiness, and had built up a factitious self-respect from the ruins themselves of true dignity. His position was the antipodes of Balder's ; yet, if results were evidence, it was tenable and more successful.

This plump superficial smiling little hair-dresser was a person of no importance, yet it happened to him to modify not only Helwyse's external aspect, but the aspect of his mind as well—by the presentation of a new idea ! For, strange to say, Helwyse had never happened to doubt that Seraphim were higher than Cherubim, or that independence was the only ladder to

heaven. To be taught by one avowedly without intellect is humiliating; but the experience of many men will furnish examples of a singular disregard of this kind of proprieties!

When the shaving was done to the barber's satisfaction, he held the mirror before his customer's face. Helwyse looked at the reflection narrowly, as was natural, since he was making the acquaintance of one who was to be his near and inseparable companion. He saw a set of features strongly, yet gracefully built, but shorn of a certain warm manly attractiveness. The immediate visibility of mouth and chin, index of so large a part of man's nature, startled him: he was dismayed at the ease with which the workings of emotion might now be traced. Man, wholly unveiled to himself, is, indeed, an awful spectacle, be the dissection room that of the surgeon or of the psychologist. Hardly might angels themselves endure it. A measure of ignorance regarding ourselves is wise, because

consciousness of a weakness may lead us to give it rein. Perfect strength can co-exist only with perfect knowledge, but neither is attainable by man. He should pray to be somewhat screened from himself, lest his sword fail : lest the Gorgon's head in his breast change him to stone !

The gracious abounding veil of Balder's life had vanished, leaving nakedness. Henceforth, he must depend on fence, feint and guard, not on the downright sword-stroke. For Adam, the fig-leaf succeeded innocence as a garment ; for Helwyse, artificial address must do duty as a fig-leaf. The day of guiltless sincerity was past ; gone likewise the day of open acknowledgment of guilt. Now dawned the day of counterfeiting—not always the shortest of our mortal year !

On the whole, Helwyse's new face pleased him not. He felt self-estranged and self-distrustful. Standing on the borders of a darker

land, the thoughts and deeds of his past life swarmed in review before him. Many a seeming-trifling event now showed as the forewarning of harm to come. The day's journey once over, we see its issue prophesied by every trumpety raven or cloud that we have passed since morning. But then, the omens would have read as well another way; for nature, like man, is twofold, and can be quoted to Satan's advantage as glibly as to God's.

"Very well done," said Helwyse to the barber, passing a hand over the close-cropped head and polished chin. "The trouble is that it cannot be done once for all!"

As the little man smilingly remarked, however, the charge was only five cents; and his customer paid it and went out, and was seen by the hair-dresser to walk listlessly up the street. The improvement in his personal appearance had not mended his spirits. Indeed, it cannot be disguised that his trouble was more serious



than a barber's skill could altogether set right.

Were man potentially omniscient (as Balder assumed) then might his late deed be no crime, but an exercise of prerogative merely. But is knowledge of evil, real knowledge?—God is goodness, and man is evil: God knows both good and evil: man knows evil—knows himself—only; knows God only so far as he ceases to be man and admits God. But this simple truth becomes confused if we fancy a possible God in man.

This was Balder's difficulty. Possessed of a strong comprehensive mind, he made a providence of himself; confounded intelligence with integrity; used the moral principle, not as a law of action, but as a means of insight. The temptation so to do is strong in proportion as the mind is greatly gifted. But experience shows no good results from it. Blind moral instinct, if not safer, is more comfortable.

Not the deed alone, however, but the revelation that it brought, preyed upon Balder's peace. If he were a criminal now, then was the whole logic of his past life criminal likewise. The deed done yesterday was but the inevitable issue of a course of thought extending over many yesterdays. Why then had not his present gloom impended also, and warned him in time?—Because, while parleying with the Devil, he looks angelic; but having given our soft-spoken interlocutor house-room, he becomes direfully sincere, to make up for lost time!—

On first facing the world in his new guise, Helwyse felt embarrassment at his nakedness, which he fancied everyone must remark. But in fact (as he was not long in discovering) he was no longer remarkable; the barber had destroyed his individuality. It was what he had wished, yet his insignificance annoyed him. The stare of the world put him out of countenance; yet when they stopped staring he was

still unsatisfied. What can be the explanation of this paradox ?

Perhaps it was the occasion of his seeking the upper part of the city, where houses were more scarce, and there were fewer people to be unconcerned. He could still be the chief figure of country solitudes ! He entered Broadway at the point where Grace Church stands, and passed along it through the sparsely-inhabited region now known as ' Union Square. The cross - streets hereabouts were but roughly marked out, and in many instances were left to the imagination. On the corner of Twenty-third street was a low, whitewashed inn, whose spreading roof overshadowed its surrounding balcony. Several farmers' waggons were housed beneath the adjoining shed, and one was drawn up before the door, while its driver conversed with a man in shirt-sleeves and straw hat, answering to the name of Corporal Thompson.—Did no presentiment of the mighty

marble palace which now lifts its white walls above the roar of three thoroughfares, creep into these good people's thoughts or speech? or was their talk only of the price of potatoes as affected by the earliness of the season?—

Helwyse, perhaps, stopped at Corporal Thompson's hospitable little establishment to rest himself and get some breakfast; but whether or not, his walk did not end here, but continued up Broadway, and, after passing a large kitchen-garden on the right (whose owner, a stout Dutchman, was pacing down the central path, smoking a long-stemmed clay pipe, which he occasionally took from his lips to growl guttural orders to the gardeners who were stooping here and there among the beds), emerged into the open country, where the solitude was broken only by an Irish shanty here and there.

How long the young man walked he never knew; but at length, from the top of a low

hill, he looked north-west and saw the gleam of Hudson River. He left the road, and, striking across the rocky fields, he finally came out upon the river-bank. A stony promontory jutted out into the water, and on this—having clambered to its outer extremity—Helwyse sat down, his feet overhanging the swirling current. The tide was just past the flood.

About two hundred yards up stream, to the northward, stood a small wooden house on the beach, in front of which a shabby old mariner was bailing out his boat. Southwards, some miles below, curved the shadowed edge of the city, a spire mounting here and there, a pencilled mist of smoke from the chimneys, a fine fringe of masts around the furthest point. In front of the spectator slid ceaselessly away the vast sweep of levelled water, and still came undiminished on. The opposing shore was a mile distant, its rocky front gradually increasing in abruptness and height until lost round the

northern curve. But directly opposite the Helwyse promontory the stony wall was for some way especially precipitous and high, and its lofty brink was serried with a thick phalanx of trees.

This spot finally monopolised the adventurer's attention; had he been in Germany he would have looked for the grey towers of a castle rising behind the trees. The place looked inaccessible and romantic, and was undeniably picturesque; New York was far enough away to be mistaken for Alexandria, while the broad river certainly took its rise in as prehistoric an age as the Nile itself. Who could say that, in the early morning of the world, some chieftain had not built his stronghold here, and fought notable battles, and given mighty feasts, and finally married and begotten stalwart sons, or a daughter beautiful as earth and sky? Where to-day were her youth and beauty, her loving, noble heart, her

warm, melodious voice, her eyes full of dark light? Why were there no such women now?—not warped, imperfect, only half alive in body and spirit, but charged from the heart outwards with pure divine vitality—natures vivid as fire, yet serene by strength!

“Why did not I live when she lived, to marry her?” muttered Helwyse, in a dream. “A woman whose infinite variety age could not alter nor custom stale! With a true wife I should have fallen into no error. Who can comprehend the world if he put half the world away?—Too late. She might have helped me rise to greatness, but not to bear disgrace.—Ah, Balder Helwyse, my poor fool, you babble as if she stood before you to take or to leave! *You* rise to greatness?—you never had the germs of greatness in you! You are so little that not the goddess Freya herself could have made you tall! What delusion made you believe yourself better than any other worm?”—

Through a break not more than a rod or two wide in the hedge of trees which lined the opposite cliff, it was possible to get a narrow glimpse of what lay beyond. A strip of grassy lawn extended in front of what seemed to be the grey stone corner of a house. The distance was too great to make out details, but it looked solidly built—not after the modern style. As Helwyse gazed, sharpening his eyes to discern more clearly, he saw a figure moving across the lawn directly towards him. It advanced to the very brink, and, pausing there, seemed to return his glance. Helwyse could not tell whether it were man or woman. Had the river only been narrower!

The next moment, however, he remembered his telescope, and taking it from the case, he was at one bound within a hundred yards of the western shore!—Man or woman? He steadied the glass on his knee and looked again. A woman, surely,—but how strangely



dressed! Such a costume had not been in vogue since Damascus was a new name in men's mouths. Balder gazed and gazed. Accurately to distinguish the features was impossible—tantalisingly so! for the gazer was convinced that she was both young and beautiful. Her motions, her bearing, the graceful peculiarity of her garb—a hundred nameless evidences made it sure. How delightful to watch her in her unconsciousness! Yet he felt a delicacy about thus stealing on her without her consent or knowledge. The misgiving could not, however, deter him from looking—perhaps it gave a zest to the enjoyment.

“The very princess you were just now dreaming of!” murmured he; “the most beautiful and complete woman!—Would I were the prince to win thee!”

This aspiration was whispered aloud, as though she were within conversable distance. Balder could be imaginative enough when the

humour took him. Hardly had the whisper passed his lips when he saw the princess majestically turn her lovely head, slowly and heedfully, until her glance directly met his own. His cheeks burned!—it was as if she had actually overheard him. He saw her stretch her arms towards him, and then, with a gesture of beautiful power, clasp her hands together, and draw them in towards her bosom.

Prince Balder's hand trembled, the telescope slipped; the quick effort he made to regain it lent it an impetus which shot it far into the water. It had done its work, and was gone for ever. The beautiful princess was once more a vague speck across a mile of rapid river;—now even the speck had moved behind the trees and was out of sight.

The episode had come so unexpectedly and so quickly passed, that now it might almost seem not to have been at all. But Helwyse had yielded himself unreservedly to the spirit

of the moment ; following so aptly on the fanciful creation of his thought, the apparition had for him a peculiar significance. The abrupt disappearance afflicted him like a positive loss.

Did he then soberly believe himself and the princess to have exchanged glances,—not to speak of thoughts,—across a river a mile wide ? —Perhaps he merely courted a fancy from which the test of reason was deliberately withheld. Spirits not being amenable to material laws, what was the odds (so far as interchange of spiritual sentiments was concerned) whether the prince and princess were separated by miles or by inches ?

But however plausible the fancy, it was now over. Helwyse lay back upon the rock, drew his hat over his eyes, folded his hands beneath his head, and appeared to sleep.

## XIV.

### *THE TOWER OF BABEL.*

IN a perfect state of society, when people will think and act in harmony with only the purest aesthetic laws, a knowledge of stenography and photography will be all-sufficient to the creation of perfect works of art. But until that epoch comes, the artist must be content, (under pain of redundancy and confusion,) to do the grouping, toning and proportioning of his picture for himself. People now-a-days seldom do or think the right thing at the fitting moment ; insomuch that the historian of their lives, if he will make himself intelligible, must exercise his own discretion in the arrangement of his materials.

Now, in view of the rough shaking which late events had given Balder Helwyse and his

opinions, it is doing no violence to probability to suppose him improving the first quiet moment to pass those opinions in review. And it would be easy, by a glance at the magic ring, to reproduce his meditations just as they passed through his brain. But it seems preferable, on grounds of brevity and pertinence, to recall a dialogue which had taken place about three years before.

Balder and his father were then in the north of England, and the latter (who never concerned himself with any philosophy save of the plainest and most practical sort), was not a little startled at an analogy drawn by his son between the cloud-cap on Helvellyn's head, and the Almighty! Premising that the cloud-cap in question, although apparently stable, was in fact the effect of the continuous passage of warmer air through a cold region about the summit of the mountain, whereby it was condensed into visibility for a moment, and then swept on :—having premised this, and disregard-

ing the elder's remark, that he didn't believe a word of it :—Balder went on to affirm that God was only a set of attributes—the perfection, in fact, of all human attributes, and not an individual at all.

“ And what has that to do with your cloud-making theory ? ” demanded Thor with scorn.

“ These perfect attributes,” replied Balder, unruffled, “ correspond to the region of condensation—the cold place, you understand.”

“ Oh, do they ? Well ? ”

“ The constant condensation of the warm current from below, corresponds to the taking on of these attributes by a ceaseless succession of human souls. In filling out the Divine character, they lose their identity, and so pass on to make room for others.”

“ And what are the attributes ? ”

“ They are ineffable,—they are omniscience,—the comprehension of the whole idea of the universe.”

“ You expect me to believe that, eh ? ” growled Thor.

“ If I could believe you understood it, dear old sceptic ! ” returned Balder with affectionate irreverence, throwing his arm across his father’s broad shoulders. “ I say that every soul of right capacity, living for culture, and not afraid of itself, will reach at last that highest point. It is the sublime goal of man, and no human life is complete unless in gaining it. Many fail, but not all. I will not !—No, I am not blasphemous : I think life not worth having without a definite aim, and that the highest conceivable.”

Thor, having stared in silence at his descendant, came forth with a stentorian viking laugh, which Balder bore with perfect good humour.

“ Ho, ho ! the devil’s in you, boy !—in those black eyes of yours—ho, ho ! No other Helwyse ever had such eyes or such ideas either ! Well, supposing you passed the condensation point, what becomes of you then ? ”

Balder, who was entirely in earnest about the matter, answered gravely,

“I cease to be ; but what was I, becomes the pure life-giving spiritual substance, and enters into fresh personalities, and passes up and through again, in endless circulation.”

“Hum ! and how with the evil ones, boy ?”

“As with all waste matter : they are cast aside, and sink gradually into annihilation as distinct souls : but they may still manure the soil, and so involuntarily help the growth of others. And thus sooner or later, in one form or another, all come into use.”

“For all I see, then,” quoth Thor, “your devils and your Gods come to the same end.”

“There is much the same difference,” retorted the philosopher, “as between light and the earth ; both help flowers to grow, but light gives colour and beauty, earth only the base material. I would rather be the light !”

“Another thing,” proceeded Thor, ignoring



this distinction, "admitting everything else, how do you account for your region of condensation?"

"From the necessity of perfection," said Balder, after some consideration. "There would be no meaning in existence unless it tended towards a supreme condition. But you have hit upon the question which nobody can fully answer."

Thor shook his head and tossed his huge grizzled beard. "German University humbug," growled he. "Get you into a scrape some day, boy; the cloud's not made in that way, I tell you!—Come, let's go back to the inn."

"Take my arm," said Balder; and as they descended the spur of the mountain together, he added lovingly, "I'll never bring any clouds across your sky, my dear old man!" So the hospitable inn received them.

The discussion was never renewed between the two; but Balder held to his creed. He

elaborated and fortified what had been mere outline before. No dogma can be conceived which many circumstances will not seem to confirm and justify. But we cannot attempt to keep abreast of Balder's deductions. There are as many theological systems as individual souls, and save by its originator no system can be wholly apprehended.

Mastery of men and things,—supreme knowledge to the end of supreme power,—such seems to have been his ambition; an ambition too abstract and lofty to admit much rivalry. Nature and human nature were at once his laboratory and his instruments. His senses were to him the outlets of divinity.—The good and evil of such a scheme hardly need pointing out. It was the apotheosis of self-respect; but self-respect raised to such a height becomes self-worship: human vision dazzles at the awful sublimity of the prospect; in the moment of greatest weakness the soul arrogates power

invincible — and so falls ! For, the mightier man is, the more seems he to need the support of a mightier Man than he can ever be.

No doubt, Balder had often found himself assailed by doubts and weariness; the path had seemed too arduous and too long, and he had secretly pined for some swift means of issue from perplexity and delay. In such a moment was it that the voice of darkness gained his ear, and, like a Will-o'-the-Wisp, lured him to calamity. Verily, it is not easy to be God. The builders only of the Tower of Babel know the awfulness of its overthrow !

Balder's spirit lay prostrate among the ruins, too stunned and bewildered to see the reasons or justice of his overthrow. Such a condition is dangerous ; for, the deeper part of the mind being either occupied with its disaster or stupefied by it, the surface is readily moved to folly or extravagance, to deeds and thoughts which a saner moment would ridicule. Well

is it, then, if our blind steps are guided to a better foothold than we know how to choose for ourselves. Angels are said to be peculiarly watchful over men in sleep : perhaps also during the darkness consequent upon moral perversion.

## XV.

### *CHARON'S FERRY.*

AFTER lying motionless for, perhaps, half-an-hour, Balder suddenly sat upright, and settled his hat upon his head. A new idea which had come to him, later than it might have done, demanded to be put in action without delay.

The old mariner had by this time bailed out his boat, shipped a mast in the forward thwart, and was dropping down stream. As he neared the promontory, Balder hailed him :

“Hullo! Skipper, take me across the river.”

The skipper, without replying, steered shorewards, while the other clambered down the rock to meet him. After a brief parley, during which the old fellow scrutinised his intending passenger closely from head to foot, a bargain was struck, and they put forth, tacking dia-

gonally across stream. For, Balder having charged his imagination with castles, warlike chieftains, and beautiful princesses, had finally arrived at the conclusion that the stone house was an enchanted stronghold, the figure he had seen an imprisoned lady, himself a knight-errant bound to rescue her and give the wicked enchanter his deserts. This fancy possessed his brain more vividly than do realities many men. The plumed helmet was on his head, he glittered with shining arms and sword, his heart warmed and throbbed with visions of conflict and bold emprise. The commonplace surroundings assumed an aspect of grandeur and stateliness in harmony with his chivalric mania. The leaky craft in which he sate became a majestic barge, the skipper, some wrinkled Charon, who doubtless had ferried many a brave knight to his death beneath yonder castle's walls. No birch stump was that on the shore, but the castle champion, ready with silver armour and

drawn sword to do battle against all comers.—  
Trim thy sail, ferryman, and steer with thy  
best cunning.

That kind of insanity which sees in outward manifestation the fantasies of the mind, is an affection incident at certain times to every one. The artist sees beauty in a landscape, the artisan in pulleys and levers, and either is so far insane in the eyes of the other. Nature discovers grandeur, beauty, truth, according as the quality abides in the seer. In this view Balder or Don Quixote was no more insane than other people. Their eyes bore true witness to what was in their minds, and the sanest eyes can do no more. Their minds were out of focus, perhaps; but who can cast the first stone?

The skipper, masquerading as Charon, was lean, brown, and wrinkled: neither complete nor clean of garb, and bulging as to one lank cheek with a quid of tobacco. During the

first minutes he sat silent, dividing his attention between his boat and his passenger.

“Whereabouts will yer land, Captain?” he asked when they were fairly under way.

“Wherever there is a path upwards. Who is the owner of the castle?”

“The castle? Well, there ain’t many rightly knows just what his name is,” drawled Charon, cocking his grey eye rather quizzically. “Some says one thing, some another. I have heard tell, now, that he was Davy Jones himself!”

“Have you ever seen him?”

“Well, I don’t know: I’ve seen something that might have been him,—but there’s no telling; he can fix himself up to look like pretty much anything, they say. There ain’t many calls up at the castle, whoever he is!”

“Why not?”

“Well, there’s a big wall all around the place for one thing, and never a gate in it; so without yer dives under ground and up



again, there don't seem no easy way of getting in."

"Does the owner never come out then?"

"Well, he can get out, I expect, when he wants to," answered the wrinkled humourist, with a weather-beaten grin. "They do say he whips off on a broomstick about once a month, and steers for Bos-ton!" His fashion of utterance was a leisurely sing-song, like the roll of a vessel anchored in a ground-swell.

"What does he go there for?" demanded Prince Balder, with the air of finding nothing extravagant or improbable in the sailor's yarns; and the latter, a little in doubt as to whether his interlocutor were a simpleton or a "deep one," said,—after a pause to replenish his imagination perhaps,—

"Well, in course I knows nothing what he does; but they do say he coasts around to all the ho-tels and overhauls the log. He's been laying to for some one these

twenty year. My idea it's about time he hailed him!"

"What does he want with him?"

"Well, yer see, what folks say is, this chap had played some game off on Davy, so Davy he puts a rod in pickle, and vows he'd be even with the chap yet!

"Yer see—I'll tell yer," continued Charon, leaning forward on his knee and speaking confidentially: "just as this chap was putting off,—with some of Davy's belongings, likely,—Davy he up and cut a slice of his flesh and blood off him. Well, he takes this slice and fixes it up one way and another, and makes a witch out of it, handsome as she can be, enough to draw a chap's heart right through his jacket. Now, being as she's his own flesh and blood, d'yer see, this chap I'm telling yer on's bound to come back after her afore he dies. Well, soon as Davy gets hold on him, he ups with him to the castle yonder, and outs

with the witch. 'Here yer are, my dear friend,' says he (as civil as may be), 'here's yer own flesh and blood a-waiting for yer!' Well, the chap he grabs for her; and once he touches her, there ain't no letting go no more. Off she starts on her broomstick, he along behind, till they gets over Hellgate"—— (Charon checked himself, made an ominous downward gesture with his forefinger, and emphasised it by spitting solemnly to leeward.)

"Did you ever meet him—this man?" asked Helwyse, rousing himself from a brown study, and looking Charon in the eyes.

"Well, now, I couldn't tell for certain as I ever met him," replied the other, returning the look with an odd wrinkling of the features. "But it's nigh on twenty year that I fetched a man across this very spot, and back again in the evening, that might have been him. Leastways he was the last caller ever I took over to that house!"

“ I am the first since he, eh ?”

“ Well, yer are ; and, Captain—no offence to you, but, excepting for a heap of hair he had, he was like enough to you to be your twin-brother !”

“ Yes, or even myself !—and so Davy Jones goes by the name of Doctor Glyphic in these parts, does he ?” said Balder, with a sudden incisive smile and glance, which quite cut through the old ferryman’s self-possession. The boat at the same moment glided into a little cove, and the passenger jumped ashore. Charon stood touching his weather-stained hat deferentially, too much alarmed and mystified to speak. But the fare which Helwyse handed him restored his voice.

“ Thankee, Captain—thank yer kindly ; hope no offence, Captain—a chap picks up a deal of gossip in twenty years, and”——

“ No offence in the world ! I take you for a powerful enchanter, who seems to steer one

way while he is taking his passenger in another.  
—Where are you bound?"

"Well, I was dropping down a bit to see if the schooner ain't around yet. She'd ought to be in by now, if nothing ain't runned into her in the fog."

"The schooner 'Resurrection,'—began Helwyse—and seeing that he had hit the mark, he continued—"was run into last night, on Long Island Sound. She had her bowsprit carried away; but no serious damage was done, and she'll be in by night if the wind holds."

With this the young man bade the awed and humbled old yarn-spinner farewell, not without enjoyment of his bewilderment, and turned to the zig-zag path which climbed the bank. A few vigorous minutes brought him to the summit, whence, facing round, he saw the broad river crawl beneath him, the little boat, with Charon in the stern, drifting down-

wards, and the whole rough length of Manhattan Island beyond.

A few days before Thor Helwyse's departure for Europe—some four years after his wife's death,—he had left a certain little boy and girl in charge of the nurse (a woman in whose faithfulness he placed the greatest confidence), and had crossed over from Brooklyn to New Jersey to say good-bye to brother Hiero. Returning at night, he found one of the children (his son Balder) locked up alone in the nursery. The nurse and the little girl had disappeared, nor did Thor ever again set eyes on either of them.

Balder, as he grew up, often questioned his father concerning events which had happened further back than his childish memory extended; and, among other stories, no doubt this of the farewell visit to Uncle Glyphic had often been related, with all the details. By no miracle, therefore, but simply by an acute

mental process, associating time, place, and description together, was he enabled so to dumfounder old Charon.

Embarking on a phantom quest, his brain full of whimsical visions, Balder had thus unexpectedly stepped into the path of his legitimate affair. The accident (for no better reason, perhaps, than that it was such) inspired him with a superficial cheerfulness. He had landed some distance below his uncle Glyphic's house,—for such it was,—and he now took his way towards it through a thick growth of trees and underbrush. The house was so situated, and was surrounded by so dense an array of foliage, as to be visible from no point in the vicinity. Had the site been selected with a view to concealment, the builder could not have chosen better. Remembering the eccentricity of his uncle's character, as portrayed in many an anecdote, Balder would not have been surprised to find him living underground, or in a pyramid.

On arriving at the wall whereof the ferryman had told him, he found it a truly formidable affair, some twelve feet in height, and built of brick. To scale it without a ladder was impossible; but Balder, never doubting there was a gate somewhere, set out in search of it.

It was tiresome walking over the uneven ground, and through the obstructions of stumps, bushes, and branches. The tall brick barrier seemed to be as interminable as it was unbroken. How many houses, thought Balder, might have been built with the material thus wasted! If he ever came into possession of the place, he resolved to give the brick to his friend Charon, that he might replace his wooden shanty with something more durable and convenient. It must have taken a fortune to build such a wall, and were the enclosure proportionately valuable, it was worth crossing the ocean to see it.—Still more wall! There had been fully a mile of it already, and yet



further it rambled on through leafy thickets, with no signs of a gate.

"I believe the devil really does live here!" exclaimed Balder, in impatient heat: "the only way to the other side is by flying over on a broomstick, or diving underground, as Charon said!"

Stumbling onwards a few rods further, he suddenly came again upon the river-bank, having traversed the whole length of the wall. There was actually no getting through! The castle was impregnable.

Helwyse seated himself at the foot of a tall birch tree, which grew three or four yards from the base of the wall.

"How does my uncle manage about his butcher and baker, I wonder! He might at least have provided a derrick for victualling his stronghold. Perhaps he hauls his provisions up by ropes over the face of the cliff. No doubt Charon knew about it. Shall I go down and look?"

It was provoking, having come so far to call upon a relative, to be put off with a mile or two of inhospitable brick ! The gate must have been walled up since his father's time, for Thor had never mentioned any deficiency in that respect. But Balder's determination was piqued, not to speak of his curiosity. Had the path from Mr MacGentle's office to uncle Hiero's door been straight and unobstructed, the young man might have wandered aside and never reached the end of it at all. As it was, he was goaded into resolving to see his uncle at all hazards. An additional spur was the thought of the gracious apparition that he had seen,—or dreamed he had seen,—from the further bank of the river. Had she indeed been but an apparition ? or was she the sole reality amidst the throng of fantasies evoked by his overwrought mind ? beaconing him through misty errors to a fate better than he knew.—In all seriousness, who could she be ? Charon's enigmatic hints

about witches bore no meaning to Balder's mind. Was it possible that his uncle had crowned his eccentricity by marriage, and begetting a daughter?—

These speculations were interrupted by the clear joyous note of a bird just above his head: such a note as might have been uttered by a paradisaical cuckoo, with the breath of a brighter world in its throat. Looking up, he saw a beautiful little fowl perched upon the topmost twig of the tree against which he was leaning. It had a slender bill, and a splendid crest of feathers on its head, which it set up at Balder in a most coquettish manner. The next moment it flew over the wall, and warbled from the further side an invitation to follow!

Although he could not fly, Balder reflected that he could climb, and that the top of the tree could show him what was on the other side of the wall, albeit it might not transport him thither. The birch appeared to be tolerably climbable,

and was high enough for all purposes. As to its toughness, he thought not about it. —Beneath what frivolous guises does destiny mark her approach ! Discretion is a virtue, yet had Balder been discreet enough to examine the tree before getting in to it—the ultimate consequences are incalculable !

As it was (and marvelling why he had not thought of it before), he set stoutly to work, and soon, in spite of his jack-boots, was among the upper branches. The tree trembled and groaned, but he heeded it not. There was the bird (an Egyptian bird it was, the hoopoe, descendant of a pair brought from the Nile a quarter of a century before by Dr Glyphic), the hoopoe was fluttering and warbling and setting its brilliant cap at him more captivately than ever. A glance over the enclosure revealed a beautifully fertile and luxuriant expanse, damasked with soft green grass, and studded with flowers and trees. A few hundred yards

away, billowed the white tops of an apple orchard in full bloom. Southward, half seen through boughs and leaves, rose an anomalous structure of brick, glass, and stone, which could only be the famous house upon the designing and erecting of which old Hiero Glyphic had spent years and fortunes.

The tract was like an oasis amidst a forbidding land. The soil had none of the sandy or clayey consistency peculiar to New Jersey, but was deep and rich as an English valley. The sunshine rested more warmly and mellowly here than elsewhere. The southerly breeze acquired a tropical flavour in loitering across it. The hoopoe, which had seemed out of place on the hither side of the wall, now looked as much at home as though the Hudson had indeed been the Nile.

“My uncle has certainly succeeded wonderfully well in transporting a piece of Egypt to America,” said Balder to himself. “Were I

on the other side of the wall, no doubt I would appreciate that also!"

The hoopoe responded encouragingly, the birch tree cracked, and Balder felt to his dismay that it was tottering beneath him. There was no time to clamber down again. With a long creak the faithless birch gave way, and leaned slowly through the air. There was nothing to be done but to go with it: but Balder, even as he descended, was able to imagine how absurd he must appear. The tree fell, but was intercepted at half its height by the top of the wall. The upper part of the stem, with its human fruit still attached to it, bent bow-like towards the earth, the trunk not being quite separated from the root.

Helwyse had managed to maintain his presence of mind thus far, and now glancing downwards, he saw the ground not eight feet below him. He loosed his hold,—and stood un-

harmed in the soft grass ! The birch tree had been his broomstick. Meanwhile, the hoopoe, with a triumphant note, flew off towards the house to tell the news.

## XVI.

### *LEGENDS AND CHRONICLES.*

HIERO GLYPHIC'S house did not come into the world complete at a birth, but was the result of an irregular growth progressing through many years. It was originally a single-gabled edifice of brick, possessing no other peculiarity than that it was brick instead of wooden. Here, red and unornamented as the house itself, the future Egyptologist was born. The parallel between him and his dwelling was maintained more or less closely so long as they existed.

He was the first pledge of affection between his mother and father; and he was also the last, for shortly after his arrival, the latter parent, (a retired undertaker by profession,) failed from this world. The widow Glyphic was much younger than her spouse, and handsome to boot; never-



theless, it was several years before she married again. Her second lord was likewise an elderly retired business man ; but he differed from her first in being enormously wealthy. The issue of this union was a daughter,—the Helen of our story,—a pretty, dark-eyed little thing, petted and indulged by all the family, and reigning undisputed over all.

Meanwhile, the old house had been deserted, Mrs Glyphic, upon her second marriage, having accompanied her husband to his more ambitious home in Brooklyn. But as years went on, Hiero (or, as he was then called, Henry) took it into his round head to return to the original family mansion and live there. No objection was made to this desire: in truth, Henry's oddities, awkwardnesses, and propensity to meddle with queer branches of research and experiment, may have helped allay the parting-pangs. Back he blundered, therefore, to the banks of the Hudson, and established

himself in his birth-place. What he did there during the next few years will never be known. Many grisly stories concerning the man in the brick house were current among the country-people. A devil was said to be his familiar friend; nay, it was whispered that he was himself the Arch Fiend! Nothing positively supernatural however, or even unholy, was ever proved to have taken place. The recluse had the command of as much money as he could spend, and no doubt he wrought with it miracles incomprehensible to the vulgar. His mind, be it remarked, had no more real depth than a cracked looking-glass, and its images were similarly disjointed and confused: nevertheless, it was capable of reflecting much fragmentary truth and beauty. There are many such men alive, but few possess unlimited means of carrying their whimsicalities into execution.

During this, which may be called the second,

period of Glyphic's life, he made several anomalous additions to the brick house, all after designs of his own. He, moreover, furnished it throughout in a manner that made the upholsterer stare. Each room,—so reads the legend,—was fitted up in a style representative of a particular country,—according to Glyphic's notions of it. He was said to take up his quarters in one room or another, according as it was his whim to be a Spaniard, a Turk, a Russian, a Hindoo, a Chinaman. He also devoted himself to gardening, and enclosed some seven hundred acres of ground adjoining the house with a picket-fence—the forerunner of the famous brick wall. The whole tract was dug out and manured to the depth of many feet, till it was by far the most fertile spot in the State. The larger trees were not disturbed, but the lesser ones gave place to new and rare varieties, mostly imported from foreign countries. Gorgeous were the flowers, like banks of sunset

clouds : the lawns showed the finest turf out of England. There was a kitchen-garden, too, rich and extensive enough to feed an army of epicures all their lives. In short, the place was a concentrated extract of the world at large, where one might at the same moment be a recluse and a cosmopolitan. Here might one live independent of the world, yet sipping the cream thereof : and might easily persuade himself that all beyond those seven hundred acres was a shadow, — the diffused reflection of the concrete existence between the cliff and the picket-fence.

But to this second period, finally succeeded the third—that which saw the birth and growth of the great Egyptian mania. Its exact natal moment is undetermined ; perhaps it was a gradual accretion. Mr Glyphic's relatives in Brooklyn were one day electrified by the news that the quondam Henry's real name was Hiero, and that Hiero purposed instant de-

parture for Egypt. Before going, however, he built the brick wall round his estate, shutting it out forever from human eyes. Then he vanished, and for nine years was seen no more.

His return was heralded by the arrival at the port of New-York of a mountain of freight, described in the invoice as the property of Doctor Hiero Glyphic, of New Jersey. The boxes, as they stood piled together on the wharf, could have furnished timber sufficient to build a small town. They held the fruits of Hiero Glyphic's antiquarian researches.

The Doctor himself—(where he picked up his learned title is unknown)—was accompanied by a slender, swarthy young factotum answering to the name of Manetho. He was introduced to the Brooklyn relatives as the pupil, assistant, and adopted son of Hiero Glyphic. The latter, though physically broadened, browned and thickened by his travels, was intellectually just the same good-natured fussy flighty original as

ever: shallow, enthusiastic, incoherent, energetic.

He and his adopted son shut themselves up behind the brick wall; but it soon transpired that extensive additions were making to the old house. Beyond this elementary fact, conjecture had the field to herself: for all the architects and builders were men imported from another State and sworn to secrecy; while the high wall and the hedge of trees baffled prying eyes. Great quantities of red granite, and many blocks of precious marbles were understood to be using in the work. The opinion gained ground that such an Oriental palace was building as never had been seen outside an Arabian fairy-tale.

By and by all was done and the workmen disappeared; but whoever hoped that now the mystery would be revealed, and the Oriental palace be made the scene of a gorgeous house-warming—was doomed to disappointment. The dwellers behind the wall emerged not from their

seclusion, nor were others invited to relieve it. In course of time Doctor Glyphic's worthy stepfather died; the mother and sister, however, still occupied the Brooklyn house up to the time of the former's death, which took place a few years afterwards. Then Helen came to live with her brother, and the Brooklyn house was put under lock and key, and so remained until Helen's marriage, when it was set in order for the bridal pair. But Thor's wife died as they were on the point of moving thither, and he sold it four years later and left America for ever.

After his departure less was known than ever of what went on behind the brick wall. The iron gate was removed, and the space filled in with masonry. No one was ever seen to enter the enclosure or to leave it, though it was supposed that, by some means or other, communication was occasionally had with the outside world. But as knowledge dwindled,



legend grew, and many were the wild tales told about the invisible Doctor and his foster-son. In his youthful days the former had been suspected of simple witchcraft: he was not let off so easily now. Manetho was at first dubbed a Genie, whom the Doctor had brought from Egypt. Afterwards it was whispered that the two were one and the same demon, who, by means of some infernal jugglery, was able to appear as two persons during the day-time, but at night resumed his undivided shape, and played all manner of unholy pranks.

By another version, Doctor Glyphic had died in Egypt, but not before bargaining with the Prince of Darkness that his lifeless body should return home in charge of its condemned soul, under the guise of Manetho. In day-light, affirmed these theorists, the body was inspired with phantom life, but became a mummy at night, when the condemned soul suffered torments till morning, and then the ghastly drama



began anew. This condition of things must continue until the sun shone all night long within the brick-wall enclosure.

A third more modified account was the one we have already listened to from Charon's lips ; and he perhaps built upon a broader basis of fact than did some of the other yarn-spinners. But under whatever form the legend appeared, there was always mingled with it a vague hint—a mysterious whisper—relating to the alleged presence in the Doctor's tomb (so the enclosure was nick-named) of an apparition wearing the female form. What or whence she was, no one pretended soberly to conjecture. Even her personal appearance was the subject of vehement dispute, some maintaining her to be of more than human beauty, while others swore by their heads that she was so hideous fire would not burn her ! These damned her for a malignant witch ; those upheld her as a heavenly angel, urged by love divine to ex-

piate, through voluntary suffering, the nameless crimes of the demoniac Doctor; but unless the redemption were effected within a certain time, she must be swallowed up with him in common destruction. Were the how and why of these alternatives called in question, the answer was a wise shake of the head!

The gentle reader will believe no one of the fantastic legends here recorded; possibly they were not believed by their very fabricators. They are useful only as tending to show the kind of moral atmosphere surrounding the house and its occupants. There is sometimes a subtle symbolic element inwoven with such tales, which, though not the truth, helps us to an understanding of the truth when we come to know it. Moreover, the fanciful parts of history are to the facts, as clouds to a landscape—the picture is not complete without them; they aid in bringing out the distances,

and cast shadows or lights over tracts else harsh and bare.

Beyond what he had gathered from the ancient mariner, Balder Helwyse knew nothing of these fearful fables ; and this perhaps accounted for the boldness with which he pursued his way towards the mysterious house, following in the airy wake of the bright-throated little hoopoe.

## XVII.

### *FACE TO FACE.*

THE ground-plan of the house was like a capital H, placed endwise towards the river. The northern side consisted of the original brick building, and the additions of the second period ; the southern was that stone edifice which so few persons had ever been lucky enough to see. The central piece held the great entrance-hall and staircase, heavily panelled with dark oak, and flagged with squares of black and white marbles.

The entrance-hall opened eastward into a generous conservatory, filling the whole wide space between the wings at that end. The corresponding western court was devoted to the roomy portico : two or three steps led up to a marble platform, twenty feet deep, and nearly

twice as wide, protected by a lofty roof, supported on slender Moorish columns. Crossing this, one came to the main door of the house, which was likewise Moorish in its arch and ornamentation. Considered room by room, and apartment by apartment, the house was good, and sometimes beautiful; taken as a whole, it was the craziest amalgamation of incongruities ever conceived by human brain.

Balder, approaching from the north, trod enjoyingly the silken grass. No misgiving had he; his uncle would hardly be from home, nor would he be apt to discredit his nephew's identity. His face had already been evidence sufficient to more than one former knower of his father:—why not also to his uncle?

The house was more than half-a-mile distant in a direct line from the birch tree, and presented an imposing appearance; but, on drawing near, the odd architectural discrepancies became noticeable. Side by side with the

prosy Americanism of the brick wing sprang the graceful Moorish columns of the portico; while beyond uprose, in massive granite, quaintly inscribed and carved, and strengthened by heavy pilasters, the ponderous Egyptian features of the southern side. The latter was neither storeyed nor windowed, and, as Balder conjectured, probably comprised but a single vast room, lighted from within.

Meanwhile there were no signs of an inhabitant either in the house or out of it. It had, in parts, an air of emptiness and neglect—not exactly as though gone to seed, but as if little human love and care had been lavished there. The deep-set windows of the brick wing, like the sunken eyes of an old woman, peered at the visitor with dusky forlornness. Lonely and stern, on the other hand, stood the Egyptian pilasters, as though unaccustomed to the eye of man; the hieroglyphics running round the cornice intensified the impression of desertion.

As the young man set foot within the portico, he laid his hand on one of the slender pillars, to assure himself that it was real, and not a vision. Cool solid marble met his grasp—the building did not vanish in a peal of thunder, with an echo of demoniac laughter.—Yes, all was real!

But the stillness was impressive; and Balder struck the pillar sharply with the palm of his hand, merely for the sake of hearing a noise. There was no answering sound; so after a moment's hesitation he walked forwards to the door, which stood ajar, purposing to call in the aid of bell and knocker. Neither of these civilised appliances was to be found. While debating whether to use his voice, or to go in and use his eyes, the joyous warble of the hoopoe fell on his ear from within; an instant afterwards came an answering note, deeper, sweeter, and stronger; it thrilled through to Balder's heart, bringing to his mind, by some obscure

process, the figure he had seen standing above the cliff.

He crossed the oak-panelled hall (where the very essence of mediæval England lingered), and came to the threshold of the conservatory. It was a scene confusedly beautiful. The air, as it touched his face, was tropically warm, and indolent with the voluptuous fragrance of flowers and plants. Luxuriant shrubs with broad-drooping leaves stood motionless in the heat. Two palm-trees uplifted their heavy plumes forty feet aloft on slender stems, brushing the high glass roof. In the midst of the conservatory a pool slumbered between rocky margins, overgrown with a profusion of reeds, grasses, and water-plants. There floated the giant leaves and blossoms of the tropical water-lily; and on a fragment of rock rising above the surface dozed a small crocodile, not more than four feet long, but looking as old, dried-up, and coldly cruel as sin itself.



The place looked like an Indian jungle; Balder half expected to see the glancing spots of a tiger crouching beneath the over-arching leaves, or a naked savage with bow and arrows. But amidst all this vegetable luxuriance appeared no human being,—no animal save the crocodile. Whence, then, that melodious voice—the clear essence of Nature's sweetest utterances?

In the left side of the conservatory was a door, the entrance to the Egyptian temple. It was square and heavy-browed, flanked by short thick columns rising from a base of sculptured papyrus-leaves, and terminating in lotus-flower capitals. Three marble steps mounted to the threshold, while on either side a sphinx reclined in polished granite. On the deep panels of the door were mystic emblems carved in relief. A line of hieroglyphics inscribed the lintel in colours deep blue, red, and black; to what purport Balder could not divine.

In the opposite side of the conservatory was a corresponding door, veiled by ample folds of silken tapestry, cunningly hand-worked with the representation of a moon half-veiled in clouds, shining athwart a stormy sea. A labouring ship was by her light warned off the lee-ward rocks. This room was one of the later additions, and by its external promise might have been the bower of some fashionable beauty thousands of years ago.

Balder looked from one of these doors to the other, doubting at which to apply. The tapestry curtain of that on the right was swept aside at the base, leaving a small passage clear to the room beyond; in this opening suddenly appeared the bright crested head and eyes of the hoopoe, peeping mischievously at the intruder: who forthwith stepped down into the conservatory, holding out to the little bird a friendly finger. The bird eyed him critically, then launched itself in the air, alighted on a spray

just above his head, and warbled out its brilliant call.

Hereupon was heard within the curtained room a quick rustling movement; the tapestry was thrust aside, and a youthful woman stepped forth among the warm plants. She was within a few feet of Balder Helwyse before seeming to realise his presence. She caught herself motionless in a moment. The sparkle of laughter in her eyes sank in a black depth of wonder; they filled themselves with Balder as a lake is filled with sunshine; and he—the man of the world and the philosopher—could only return her gaze in voiceless admiration.

Were a face and form of primeval perfection to appear among men, might not its divine originality repel an ordinary observer, used to consider beautiful such abortions of the Creator's first design as sin and degeneration have produced? Not easily can one imagine what a real man or woman would look like. Painting

nor sculpture can teach us ; we must learn, if at all, from living electric flesh and blood.

This woman was tall and erect with youthful majesty ; she stood like the rejoicing upgush of a living fountain. Her contour was subtle with womanly power, suggesting the spring of the panther, the glide of the serpent. Warm she seemed from Nature's bosom ; one felt from her the influence of trees, the peace of meadows, the high freedom of blue air, the happiness of hills. She might have been the sister of the sun !

The moulding finger of God seemed freshly to have touched her face. It was single and harmonious as a chord of music, yet inexhaustible in its variety. It recalled no other, yet one might see in it the germs of a mighty nation, who should begin from her, and among a myriad resemblances evolve no perfect duplicate. No angel's countenance, but warmest human clay, which must undergo much change

ere reaching Heaven. The sphinx before the gloom of her riddle had dimmed her primal joy,—before men vexed themselves to unravel God's webs from without instead of from within,—might have looked thus; or such might have been Isis in the first flush of her divinity, fresh from Him who made her immortally young and fair.

Her black hair was crowned with a low compact turban,—a purple and white twist of some fine cottony substance, striped with gold. Round her wide low brow ran a band of jewelled gold, three fingers' breadth, from which, at each temple, depended a broad flat chain of woven coral, following the margin of the cheeks, and falling loose on the shoulders. A golden serpent coiled round her smooth throat, and drooped its head low down on her bosom. Her elastic feet, arched like a dolphin's back, were sandalled; the bright coloured straps crossing one another half-way to the knee, set dazzlingly off the clear dusky whiteness of the skin.

From her shoulders fell a long full robe of purple byssus, over an under-dress of white which reached the knee. This tunic was confined at the waist by a hundredfold girdle embroidered with rainbow flowers, and fastened in a broad knot below the bosom, the low-hanging ends heavy with fringe. The outer robe, with its long drooping sleeves falling open at the elbow, was ample enough to envelope the whole figure, but was now girded up, and one fold brought round and thrust beneath the girdle in front, to give freedom of motion. A rare perfume came from her, like the evening breath of orange blossoms.

Balder was no unworthy balance to this picture, though his else stately features showed too much the stimulus of modern thought. He was eminent by culture, she by nature only. But Balder's culture had not greatened him. Greatness is not of the brain except as allied to the deep and pure chords which thrill at the

base of the human symphony. He might stand for our age; she, for that more primitive but profounder era which is at once man's beginning and his goal.

Balder's eyes could not frankly hold their own against her gaze of awful simplicity. All he had ever done amiss arose and put him to the blush. Nevertheless, he would not admit his inferiority; instead of dropping his eyes he closed his soul behind them, and sharpened their glance with a shallow out-striking light. Without understanding the change, she felt it and was troubled. Loftily majestic as were her form and features, she was feminine to the core—tender and finely perceptive. The incisive masculine gaze abashed her. She raised one deprecating hand, and her lips moved though without sound.

He relented at this: and straightway her expression again shifted, and she smiled so radiantly that Balder almost looked to see whence

came the light. The wondrous lines of her face curved and softened—all that was grave vanished. A summer tree standing in the sober beauty of shadow, when suddenly lit by the sun, changes as she changed: for sunshine is the laughter of the world.

The smile seemed to refresh her courage, for she came nearer, and made a sideways movement with her arm, apparently expecting it to pass through the stalwart young man as readily as through the air. On encountering solid substance, she drew startled back, half in alarm and wholly in surprise. Balder had felt her touch first as a benediction; then, it chilled him, remembering a deed which must debar him from aught so pure and innocent as she. The subtilities of his philosophy might have cajoled him anywhere save in her presence. There he felt unmistakably guilty. Yet, from an irrational dread that she whose intuitions seemed so swift and deep, might grasp the cause of his discom-



posure, he strove to hide it. Last of all the world should she know his crime!

Scarce two minutes since their meeting,—yet, perhaps, a large proportion of their lives had, meanwhile, been charmed away. No word had been spoken; eyes had superseded tongues. Nay, was ordinary conversation admissible with a young goddess such as this? So perfect seemed her mastery over those profounder elements of intercourse underlying speech, which are higher and more direct than the mechanism of articulate words,—that, perhaps, that method was unknown to her.

Nevertheless, one must say something—but what? with what sentence of supreme significance should he begin? Moreover, what language should he use? for she, whose look and bearing were so alien to the land and age, might likewise be a stranger to modern dialects—and Aryan nor Semitic was at the tip of Balder's tongue.

In the midst of his embarrassment the startling note of the hoopoe pierced his ear, and precipitated him into asking that elemental question which all created things are forever putting to one another—

“What is your name?”

END OF VOL. I.

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